

# ***The Beat Within***



THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.31



## When we're facing the blank page of

yet another Ed Note for yet another weekly issue of this unique and powerful publication, we always get a new appreciation for just what it means each week in workshops when we hand out topics and paper, and you have to face an empty page and create something of value in less than an hour. It's intimidating to have to write something that others are going to read, and that's just as true for us as it is for you. So, like you at times, we're waiting for lightning to strike; we're waiting for inspiration; we're searching our brains for ideas to put on this blank page that make it worth reading... Hmmm...

Okay, after "careful" consideration and thought, we think we'll talk about a book we've just read called "Beautiful Boy" (by David Sheff), combined with a topic most of you have already written about, "The Worst Drug."

"Beautiful Boy" is the true, and bitterly sad story of a boy as seen through the eyes of his loving father. As a child, the boy plays the games of children; he goes to school and excels there; he makes wonderful friends and is well-loved both by his friends and his family, including two younger siblings who adore him; he writes stories and poetry; he plays music; he surfs and plays sports. His upper-middle-class white background (he lives in the richest county in California) and his own gifts of intellect and personality might make you think that he couldn't fall to drugs, but you would be wrong. In fact, partly because of these strengths, he thinks he can do what others cannot (take drugs without getting hooked, for example), and he — and his family — soon learn that drug addiction doesn't care whether you're rich or poor, black or white, male or female.

What makes this story so difficult for a reader is the effects the boy's choices have on the rest of his family. Soon, to feed his habit (meth), he is lying constantly (where before he always told the truth); he steals money from his little brother's piggy bank (and wherever else he can find it); he curses out his mother and father for trying to get him into rehab programs; he constantly thinks he can stop doing drugs on his own through his own determination and willpower, although he fails every time. How do parents explain to small children why their big brother is acting like a fool? How can they explain that, even though the children love their brother, it's all right for them to be a little afraid of him, too? How can they even understand themselves that addiction is a disease, and that once it takes control, the word "choice" no longer means the same thing it once did?

In other words, how does a family that grew up with their son or brother and knew him to be kind, considerate, intelligent and respectful, understand the physical and mental changes that take over once he falls to drug addiction? The family wants to relate to him as they used to, when he was a loving son and brother, but he is no longer that same person when he is high. And when he isn't high, all he is thinking about is getting high. Now the family has to adjust their own lives and try to accommodate the actions of the one member of the family who isn't thinking about them at all. How do they deal with the unfairness of this imbalance? How do they keep letting hope rise, each time the boy enters rehab, and then feel hopeless and lost when he fails the program... over and over again? How many times can they try to save him? How many of the 24 hours in a day must they devote to thinking about their "beautiful boy?"

These are all questions raised in the book, "Beautiful Boy." And they are questions that anyone who takes or has taken drugs — or who has watched as other family members fall victim to this disease — should think about in a serious way. A drug addict becomes the center of the entire family's attention. It requires parents or guardians to search for solutions; to bail children out of jail; to cry late into the night wondering where their absent child is; to fear the phone ringing ("Is he in the hospital? Is he dead?"); to comfort the smallest children left behind and confused. It changes the entire dynamics of family by making the addict the center, and everyone else like a satellite revolving around him, sometimes in fear, sometimes in hope, sometimes in hopelessness, but always making the needs of the rest of the family secondary to the needs of the addict.

What brought this book back to mind was the recent topic, "The Worst Drug." The interesting thing about the "answers" to this question is that everybody has a different idea of what "the worst drug" is. Some of you named heroin; some chose crack; some said meth; and there were even a few who said alcohol. (There were also some very creative answers having nothing to do with chemicals, like addiction to the streets, to

thugging and to power.)

What this variety of answers tells us is that the worst drug is whichever one or ones that any family has had to deal with by watching a family member fall farther and farther under its control. Most of us have members of our own families who have become addicted to one substance or another. Many of us have lost family members. We have seen families destroyed and devastated by the effects of alcoholism just as much as from an out-of-control meth habit. We have seen people staggering from the effects of pills, but believing themselves to be fully in control. We all know too well the vacant eyes and hollow cheeks of street people looking for their next drink or their next fix. And when we see them, even though we thank god that we are not one of them, we seldom think about what they are doing to the families they come from.

So, this is a plea to those of you who have drugs on your minds (and that's a lot of you) to think not just about the "fun" you hope to get, but about the pain you are certainly leaving your family to deal with. We're not naïve enough to believe that this thought alone will keep anyone from smoking that weed, popping that pill, drinking that 40, or damaging your brains and bodies in a hundred different chemical ways. But we can still hope that maybe a few of you who haven't really given much thought to what you are doing to the families that love you will now think about it.

What "Beautiful Boy" and your writings make completely clear is that drug-addiction is not a personal choice, not a "victimless" crime, affecting only the person taking the drug. Instead, the entire family becomes addicted to the ups and downs of the addict who lives with them. In short, that "personal choice" not only destroys the person making the choice, but those who have no choice because they are the parents or the brothers or sisters. Without even meaning for it to be this way, what begins as a "personal choice" becomes one of the most selfish things an individual can do, because addiction pushes out any thoughts of others. In the personal quest to get high, even beloved little brothers and sisters can be ignored and forgotten about, left in tears and wondering what they have done to make Big Brother treat them like that.

Well, enough of our anti-drug rant. We know you've heard all the arguments for why you should not be drinking, smoking, popping, snorting or shooting up. But we're hoping that a few of you, at least, will force yourselves to think about the effects of your choices on those around you who didn't make the choices you did, but who nevertheless have to live with them. In the meantime, read, "Beautiful Boy." It's not only the story of a meth-addicted boy, it's also the story of a beautiful father...

Which leads us nicely into the first topic in this remarkable issue: "A Fool or a Father" — The first African American in this country's history to be a serious candidate for President, Barack Obama — who grew up without a father at home — says: "Any fool can have a child — that doesn't make you a father. Too many fathers are AWOL, missing from too many lives and too many homes. They've abandoned their responsibilities. They're acting like boys instead of men." Now, what about you? Are you (or will you be) a "fool" who makes a baby, or a real father? From your own experiences how do you relate to this? Do you know of any such person who has not lived up, or has lived up to their responsibilities of being a good parent?

The second topic in this issue is "The Family Jewel" — Who is the oldest person in your family? Tell us about that person and what he/she means to you. What have you learned from this person? What role do they have in your family?

And finally, we asked our Beat writers to consider "Risk" — Too many of you live life on the edge. This week we want you to describe for us the biggest risk, good or bad, that you have ever taken, and what it means/meant to you.

Well, we've managed to fill another blank page with words we hope will mean something to somebody. One thing for sure, though, the rest of the words in this issue of The Beat mean a whole lot to us, and to our faithful readers.

We'd like to dedicate this issue to all of you who have had to struggle with drug or alcohol addiction, either directly or by having to watch a family member deteriorate or die. Conquering addiction is one of the hardest things any of us can do, but when we consider what we owe those who have supported and loved us through the years, it is an effort very much worth making. To those unselfish enough to seek the help you'll need to break your addictions, we raise a toast of non-alcoholic wine, and we drink to you!



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**The Beat Within**, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

**To our writers:** What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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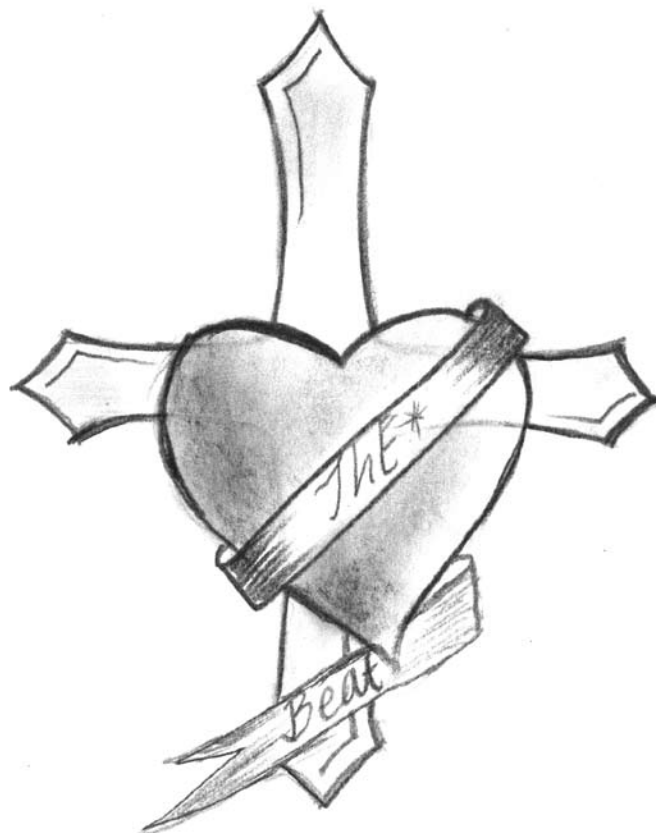
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## A Fool or a Father?

I would be a father. Because of my ability to take responsibility, I would do a good job raising a child. I would have to make changes. I can relate to taking full responsibility for a child because my father came from jail and took full responsibility of me.

**-A-D Anonymous**

**From The Beat:** Responsibility is one of the keys to being a good parent. It sounds like you've got a good head on your shoulders about what it would take.

## Big Risk

Well I took a risk one day when these youngin's came looking for my man. And I was like, he wasn't around.

They said something foul to me about doing something so I whipped out.

And the youngin's got to bustin' so I got out of there.

I called my man they were lookin' for and I told him what had happened and who was lookin' for him.

I risked my life for whipping out and not knowing what they had on them. It was all heavy. But this your man, keep it real, you hear me.

**-Weezy B.**

**From The Beat:** That sounds like a risky situation. Do you think it was worth it? Would you do it again? What did you learn from this situation?

## I Wish

I wish that there was no taxes, no cases, no police and no rapes.

I wish I had a 2008 Mercedes.

I wish my crew lived happy.

I wish my kids lived stronger than me,

I wish my mother lived longer than me,

I wish the cops stayed off the corner this week.

I wish the neighborhood hunger was ceased.

I wish them people who ain't got stuff will stop hatin' on people who got stuff.

I wish that when I get high but when I'm high I wish I wouldn't get high.

Sometimes I wish I wasn't alive.

I wish that all these girls would stop lying.

I wish these boys would stop lying.

I wish that all my people in the streets will stop dying.

**-Big Ant**

**From The Beat:** This is an amazing piece of writing. The flow and rhythm of it, and also what you wish for. You have a talent with words, and we hope you will keep at it. I think a lot of people can relate to what you wish for. We hope you are able to see all these wishes come true.

## RIP Polo and Nook

I remember the last time I saw him, he was on the street with his baby's mother. He shook my hand and told me, "What's up, Lil' Ron? You better be chillin', don't get yourself locked up."

Like a month later I got locked up, called home, they told me that Polo got killed. A whole lot of things went through my mind. And when Nook died I was locked up too. Polo was 19, Nook was 20. Both murdered by the gun. I hope they are both resting in peace. This could've been me - many times I have escaped death.

**-Ron**

**From The Beat:** Ron, we're sorry to hear about the death of Polo and Nook. That's a lot to go through, especially when you were locked up. We like how you wrote about how it made you think how lucky you were to "escape death" - what are some ways to make sure you stay safe when you get out?

## My Grandmother

My grandmother was the oldest person in my family. The time she died I was so mad and I was also feeling so good because she was in a better place. She inspired me to be a better kid than I was before she died.

**-Fat Derrick**

**From The Beat:** That's a great tribute to her Derrick, it sounds like she made a big impact on your life. Can you still be inspired by her even though she has passed on? What are some of the ways she inspired you?

## Taking Risks

In my life I took many risks good and bad, such as many ways of supporting my two year old daughter's needs and wants with no mother.

Also protecting grandmother and mother. Whatever people say I'm ready to attack. Most of the time I get away but not this time. I realized words can't hurt but hey, sometimes risking is worthy.

**-Slick**

**From The Beat:** I'm sure it's very hard to support your daughter all on your own. We hope you find the support you need to do it without jeopardizing your safety or freedom. You seem to have a good head on your shoulders and we wish you all the best.

## Money, Power and Respect

Money is something everybody wants and everybody needs because without it you won't eat, have clothes or shoes. That's why hustlers hustle for the fast money but at the same time we all take a risk at life.

Power is something everybody wants because they want to control somebody with something they got or with something someone needs. They take advantage of people who don't have nothing but at the end, everyone hopes to get the power they want.

Respect is something people want and people need because without it, life is hell. People going around disrespecting old ladies and old men who have wisdom to tell. That's why men and women don't live long, because of no respect. Because if you want respect, you have to give respect. Old people just mind their business and people on the street, they don't respect no one.

**-Monkey Man**

**From the Beat:** We agree with what you said about old men and women having wisdom to tell - that's very true. You sound like someone who has respect for the elders, good for you. Thanks for putting so much thought into this piece, great job.

## A Lost Dog, Lost On The Path

Whom I walk past a tree  
I feel free, in my own body  
As me, I feel free, I can  
Walk a mile, and past the  
Others, and have a smile  
Just for my mother

**-Ray**

**From The Beat:** This is a nice poem and we hope your mom has a chance to see it one day.

## My Risks

Finishing school is a risk because you're taking a chance that it will work out. Some of the things I want to do: buy a house, have a girlfriend, have kids, take care of my family, stay in school.

**-James**

**From the Beat:** We hope you're able to achieve all these things one day, James, and we believe that you will. It all starts with finishing school, as you said. Finishing school makes it that much closer to having "things work out", as you said. We wish you all the best with these goals and dreams.

## My Great-Grandmother

My great-grandmother lets me know that everyone doesn't die young and that I have a lot of years ahead of me. They always say, take care of yourself and I can make it to that age.

My great grandmother  
I love her more than any other  
She's like a big brother  
Looks after me like a mother  
She may be old but I'm-a  
Always love her  
I like to take risks  
And in the end I'm getting frisked  
My great-grandmother's 92  
Sometimes she doesn't know what to do  
So I help her tie her shoe  
And she teaches me lessons and  
Tells me good things to do.

**-Zay**

**From The Beat:** That's great that you've had her in your life to look out for you and let you know that you can have a long life too. What kind of lessons does she teach? Do you write to her while you're locked up? What do you most want to tell her now?

## Risks Everyday

Everyday I take risks just by leaving out the house. You might get shot because you might be loafin'.

When I got shot I was loafin', not paying attention to my surroundings. I was happy to be alive because it could've been the opposite. I could've been dead.

**-Sleepy**

**From The Beat:** We're glad you made it through that, Sleepy, and glad you are here to write about it. What are some ways to avoid risks? What are ways to feel more safe?

## Many Risks

In my life I took many risks.  
I took risks like I stole cars,  
I sold drugs,  
I broke into houses,  
I robbed.  
I did it all  
but now I regret all that stuff now.

**-G-Q**

**From The Beat:** Thanks for being so honest about the risks you took, and the regrets- that's the first step in thinking about how you want to move forward. Thank you for writing, keep it up.

## Knowing Where I'm Going

It is the life that is wild I'm trying to survive.

Knowing where I'm going.

Learning about life in Washington, D.C.

Having your ups and downs but you got to take it day by day.

Just know where you're life is going to end.

**-Norman**

**From The Beat:** Sometimes it's impossible to know where it's all going, and you gotta just put one foot in front of the other and keep the faith. Thanks for writing, Norman, we look forward to hearing more from you.

## Murder, Money and Moves

Murder happens a lot in D.C. because ninjas are snakes in the game. Your own men will kill you for that money. Murder is always happening in D.C., it's real to the point where you got to keep a gun on your hip all day. Money we need all over, so you know what that is. Moves we pull to get money sometimes. Moves get pulled when ninjas mess up in the game. Broke...when you got no work. Sometimes ninjas don't have money to get some work so they pull moves.

**-Jekwan**

**From The Beat:** When you are released, how will you make sure that you don't get hurt? Or return to Oak Hill? Thanks for writing this, we want to hear your plans for staying safe and creating the life that will be peaceful for you.

## Pain

I am pain  
I control your brain  
I have nothing to gain  
My girl is Mary Jane  
She is insane  
She shoots dope  
Steals cars to drive in two lanes  
I think God is going to make it rain  
Pain kills you.

**-Kevo**

**From The Beat:** Kevin, this is a raw poem of what pain can be - all consuming and destructive. You're right, pain can kill you. We hope you are getting the help and support you need when pain takes over and starts to control things and make bad decisions.

## What I Learned from my Grandmother

The oldest person in my family is my Grandmother. She is about 74 years old and she lives in Rocky Point, North Carolina and she is a very nice lady. She is very respectful and she is a loving lady to be around. I love her so much, that is why I am writing about her. What I learned from her is you have to give respect to get respect back.

**-Deandre**

**From The Beat:** Your grandmother sounds like a wonderful person and very loving. That is great that she is in your life. What do you most want her to know about you? What do you want to tell her if you could write to her?

## A Fool Of A Father

Man, I know people who was a fool and not a father. He got three kids, just had one recently, but the simple fact is the oldest one is a girl, and he hasn't been there for her ever. I mean, he would go and get the youngest two and wouldn't go get the oldest. But she still made it without him, she graduated from high school and now has a good, decent job.

**-Lil' Mike**

**From The Beat:** That's a good example of not taking full responsibility as a parent. That's great that she was able to go on and finish school, and find a good job. Good for her.

## My Grandmother

The oldest person in my family is my grandmother who is 69 years old. My grandmother means a lot to me because she was strong enough to take surgery at 67 and live through. Also because she was the only person I burnt bridges with and still would accept me to live with her when nobody else would. I have learned to block out the fake and stay true to the real from her. She just plays the grandmother role since everybody is all out of shape in our family.

**-A-D Anonymous**

**From The Beat:** That's a great quality, that she loved you no matter what, and opened her doors to you "when nobody else would." Are there certain things you learned from her that you would like to show towards someone else? Is there anyone in your life that you would like to forgive, in the way that she forgave you?



## No More Tricks and No More Games

When I first knew I was a father, I knew I was a fool  
Doing what I thought other people was doing 'cause I  
thought it was cool

And when I thought about it, I dropped out of school  
And banging on the street

People was dying so I was holding a heat  
No speak

I was ready to kill

Selling this, selling that and popping pills

Then I got locked up for having a gun

I want to start over, got a lot of options, but school ain't one

But now I got a different mind set

And I'm ready to change

I'm a new man, bettering things

I'd rather work for my little bit of change

No more tricks and no more games

I'd rather be a hard-working man.

-Andre

**From The Beat:** Andre, you are a very talented writer and this is an amazing piece. We especially like all the emphasis on change, how you want to be a better person, a "hard working man." It sounds like something inside of you wants a new life. We hope you are able to find the work that you want and the path towards your dreams.

## A Risk

One day I was out in Maryland where I used to live. I met two new people, when I was 16 and they were 18 and 19. I didn't think Maryland was like D.C., I just thought it was sweet. So we walked into one of the neighborhoods down the block and saw about ten boys. They were on top of this car when I looked at them. I looked again and they stepped off, like scattered out.

Five minutes later something told me to look back. I looked back and saw a boy creeping up with a strap. I said, "break, y'all, break!" We ran and got away.

The risk was going somewhere I didn't know with two clowns I didn't know. Almost lost my life. I thank Allah for saving me.

-Praising Allah

**From The Beat:** We're glad you made it out of that situation okay. You describe it well, with lots of detail and reflection. We look forward to hearing more from you.

## A Fool or a Father

Well first of all I am a young father and I hate to see young ladies or women out there with children and no father, it makes me sick.

By the way, my name is Anthony but they call me Slick, and as you can see by my nick name that's why I have a child. Her name is Tiara, she's two years old, and I am 17, turning 18 next year. I am a Pisces, so is my daughter and baby mother, I love her like there's no other in this world but she pisses me off to the point where I don't need her no more, but I'll deal with it.

One day she broke up with me but the most unusual thing in America happened that day. I realized it is time to show that I am grown and can handle my own, and I did - got a job and everything but I have no clue where my baby mother is. I'm going home July 25th to my daughter where we'll be united forever.

Don't get me wrong, but I was sort of a fool for making a baby at my age, but sure enough I lived up to my responsibilities with no doubt, and I'm an excellent parent. Others who duck and run from what they put on God's earth should be punished severely. I'm still looking for a woman to talk to.

-Slick

**From The Beat:** Anthony, you are such a good writer and this is filled with a lot of insight. We applaud you for trying to raise your daughter and meet the responsibility of being a parent head on. We wish you all the best as you resume life on the outside. Keep in touch, keep writing and keep drawing.

## Risks and Regrets

I've has many risks in my life. Like when an older person told me to do something and I went behind their back and did the wrong thing. Many of those wrong things I did I regret them to the fullest. I knew what I was doing but before I did it, I just asked God if he can forgive me for being lost.

-Lil' Mike

**From The Beat:** This is such a great piece of writing, with so much awareness. It sounds like there is a voice inside you that goes off when you know you're going down the wrong path - or feel lost. We hope that when you get out you will listen to what you know is right inside of you.

## Age Five to Fourteen

Age about Five

Where was I at?

Somewhere trying to hide  
Why?

I was like an alley cat

Trying to stay alive

No clothes and wore

Payless

Mom full of stress

Man, I wish we were

blessed

Age about 7

I thought I was in heaven

Stepdad came in my life

No more Payless

We moved to a better  
apartment

But still in the 'hood

I thought we was good

In our new apartment

No more bugs

I wanted to be cool

So I asked the old heads

I wanted to sell drugs

I skipped school

And I went behind the pool

To smoke

Age about fourteen

Started to play with glocks

Mine had a red bean

I stayed on the block

And I sold my rocks

I got locked-up

Damn I thought I was in  
hell

Can't I get bail?

Come home broke

Damn it was cold

No money for a coat

My guns were sold

I needed money

So I sold dope

Money was coming

Like bees go to honey

Police ran in my house

Back in jail

Come home on bail

So I was broke

I need to stop

Because the streets is

NO JOKE.

-Kevin

**From The Beat:** This is a great piece of writing, Kevin. You have a way with words and describe very well all the changes you went through from age 5 to age 14. How does the next chapter turn out? You mention wanting to stop, what will you do to make sure you stay free on the outside and don't get locked up again?

## Good Person

When I get out of here I am looking forward to a good life with my sister, mother, brother, and having a new job so that I can be a good person in my community, and I would like to have a baby so that I can stop getting locked up.

-James

**From The Beat:** We agree with you about getting a job and contributing to the community - those are great ways to stay on the outside. Are you sure that having a baby will keep you from getting locked up? It's a big responsibility to care for and provide for another life, you want to be sure you have everything you can give.

## I Took A Risk

I play for money  
and lost, but pause  
when I see a ball  
stand up tall and  
I made another fall

-Ray

**From The Beat:** Was the risk worth it? How would you change it next time? How do you make sure you don't "fall" when you get out?

## Poem for Mom

This is a story about me and my life and what I've been doing down at Oak Hill. My name is Joshua. I'm 16 years old. I go to school in Washington, D.C., I'm in the 10th grade. I live in Washington, D.C. in the Northeast part. I love my family, they are so special to me, especially my mother, because she's my heart. Everyday of the week she's special. This is a poem to my mom:

Mom, you stay in my heart all the time  
She squeezes my heart like a lemon-lime

I love mom, I hold you tight

If I think you never lose a fight

You is my poem, and you is right.

I love the world, it will never stop.

I wish I would stop stealing cars

Because I wouldn't have been down at Oak Hill right now

If I could take back the things I did like stealing cars

And robbing people - that's why I'm down at Oak Hill

right now.

Because I wanted to do me all day, everyday

And if I wouldn't have started smoking, I wouldn't have  
been locked up.

**-Joshua**

**From The Beat:** This is a great poem to your mom - we hope she has a chance to see it. It sounds like she has given you a lot of love. You also write very well about how you got in Oak Hill, and how you wish you could stop the habits that got you there. Do you think you can turn a new corner when you get out? How will you do it?

## Superman

My biggest risk was me riding the Superman roller coaster at Six Flags. What it means to me is fear, and giving me a tingle in my stomach. I don't like being high off my feet at all.

**-Mechee**

**From The Beat:** We hear you, that sounds like a big risk! I like how you described how it made you feel in your stomach- that brings it very alive and real.

## Broken Glass

Crazy mad

Mad like a vulture

No prey

I am a soldier

Wounded in duty

I'm angry man

You hear me?

Like a second place loser

Loser man

Can you dig it?

Can you feel me, winner?

I am not weird, I don't hold

Grudges or sing in the shower

Do you?

I break glass, I cut it, man

I am able to cut glassy stares

With sharper ones

Believe me I'll do it

I'll handle it

I'm crazy mad

You can't stop the rain

Or the reign

**-Antwaan**

**From the Beat:** Antwaan, thanks for writing, you have a way with words. Who is this poem speaking to? Beyond the anger of your situation, what do you most want people to know about you? What dream do you have that you most want to come true?

## A Lot To Say

My pockets ain't that phat

I rotate to the rhythm of a ghetto, grape, jimbe voice

My step is far to the left

And I don't wanna keep up with generation

Expense, explore, excite, express myself

I don't wear nothing of a Nautica, Eddie Bauer, Fila,

Timberland, Rockport, Mike Jordan

My clothes stay big K-Mart cool, Target fresh.

I'm not hip hop, dread, retro, or pierced

Brotha don't want to be wrapped up in 70's leather

Polyester Afro 'zones

My hair is not tightly faded

Brown-skinned

Flawless suave, my ride ain't a drop top

Bassed hydraulic screamin' pimp wagon

My tongue was not meant to mac

My thoughts are tightly wound about

Making one Mrs. Mine

I'm cream-neutral

Chills of gray brown patterns

Forgive me for not speaking

My dance of rejection freaks me breathless

In a room of human collages I'd rather sit and converse with  
anger, happiness

My personality's off-spring

I'm not down with impressions of an urban hip hop image

No, that stereotype doesn't move me

My words compliment those that welcome them

'Til then they stay colorfully quiet

With a lot of a little to say.

**-Antwan**

**From The Beat:** You have a lot to say, thanks for sharing your writing with the Beat. We look forward to hearing more about you, beneath the "stereotype" as you say.

## My Two Kids

The biggest risk I had was when I had two kids and they are girls. The best thing in my life is my two kids.

**-D**

**From the Beat:** We hope that you are able to re-unite with your two girls and create everything that you wish for them. It sounds like you really appreciate them.

## Change I Get 'Til I Reach Fame

They call me J-R, I'm a junior to this game

I stay on the block trying to stack me some change

I'm so focused I never played games

It's a shame how I make change but it's all good 'cause I  
make change

It makes change so I make change

So change I get 'til I reach fame

We reach fame then hot like flames

Then ninjas want fake then gun go bang

Gun go bang then locked in chains

Then get out then back to change

Then come on the track to fame

Then once again then hot like flames

Then got fans that blow me money

Then got females but need one honey

That one honey can be about money

Got to be about me and got to be about I

Got to be a freak and got to be funny

And got to brighten days when days are not sunny

Can't play me 'cause I'm not no dummy

'Cause I stay focused when it comes to money.

**-Roy**

**From The Beat:** Roy, nice rhyming and thanks for sharing with The Beat. You have a talent with words and we hope that will serve you throughout life. We hope that real change can come your way that doesn't involve hustling and putting yourself in danger. Keep writing, keep expressing yourself and your dreams.

## How I Feel

Right now I gotta write on how I feel.  
Because right now there's nothing more important than  
how I feel.  
Only if you knew or just had a clue.  
How a man like me felt so blue.  
I been through so much, get mad when I'm touched.  
Being in here just makes it worse.  
I feel so bad like I'm cursed.  
Man only if you knew of just had a clue.  
How a man like me feel so blue.  
People ask why I look so down.  
Ain't it clear to see I'm stuck with a frown.  
(to be continued)

**-Lil' Nite**

*From The Beat: You've got real talent, Lil' Nite! And we can't wait to see the second part of this poem, because you're right, nothing in the world is more important than knowing and expressing how you feel.*

## Risk

Life is a risk you take when you get in a fight and  
hurt the person real bad, and that person is in real bad  
condition that the person might not live... that's a risk  
you don't want to take. But people take the risk of doing  
their thing.

**-Chopolin**

*From The Beat: It seems like yes, the risks of violence are everywhere. Because we could get hurt, or hurt another person, and have to face the system because of it, or nightmares and thoughts of regret because of what we've done. Why do you think people get tempted to take such dangerous risks?*

## Something I'm Going Through

This is Lil' Elfy. Something I'm going through man is  
that I'm locked up in Solano County Juvy.  
I went to court yesterday and they said I was going  
to New Foundation. I'm not cool because I miss my mom  
and bro and sisters and homegirls. I'm in here for some  
months and I can't wait to get out, I'm going to throw a  
lil party at my house for my birthday man, I'm going to  
spend my birthday in here. Well I got to go, peace.

**-Lil Elf**

*From The Beat: We're sorry you are going to be separated from your family and friends... but it's good you're already making plans for celebrating a release! Are you also making plans for how to stay out of trouble?*

## Livin' My Life, Tryin' to Survive

What's up Beat, man I miss being on the block and I miss  
my girl. I need to get out and live my life. The police be  
trying to get me because of my reputation on the streets.  
I be just livin' my life trying to survive. I just been living a  
fun life and then when everything was going good I ended  
up in here.

And the risk is that I got a lot of beef because of where  
I'm from, but I don't care. I'm going to always be in my  
hood, every day regardless of the beef. I'm just with the  
shhh, doing my thang

But yeah I miss my family too, they waiting for me to  
come home. And my baby girl is too. I live with my girl,  
that's my world, you feel me Beat.

**-Emil**

*From The Beat: It must be hard to balance loving your family, and your girl, but also being torn away from it because of turf drama and turf violence. What does your family think of your life on the streets? And your girl?*

## Risk

I took a bad risk by hanging with the wrong crowd. I  
was kickin' it with my ninjas, then stuff started getting  
ugly. I was tired of not getting it like everybody else in  
the hood.  
So I started hittin' licks and stealing cars decks. Then I  
started smokin', drinkin' and playin wit' my nose. After  
so long, I started coming to juvenile hall.  
It's taken weeks, months, years even, away from me.  
I'm still here wastin' my teenage life. Remember, be a  
teenager while you can. Time is too short to waste. Stay  
true to da game!

As you struggle to hustle, taking gain after loss  
Don't get discouraged, just remember who's boss,  
Handle your business, and always watch your back  
Don't sleep up on these boys, waiting to attack,  
As you creep through the streets, the crack fiends holla  
They've done any and everything to give you those  
dollars,  
I hope it will last, I hope you make something of it  
Time will tell if something good will come from it,  
But as you count highs, count the lows too  
Whatever you do, forever remain true.  
What choice to you have? It's in by nature  
Your only fault is...being a player.

**-D-A**

*From The Beat: Your rhyme speaks of stayin' true/But that game won't ever stay true to you/The streets don't care about your dreams/Or the people you love and the things that you seen/Be a player but play it to win it/You got in now get out, or the streets'll take you in a minute.*

## I Do Take Risks

Yes Sir I do take risks  
One is doing the wrong thing and living like this  
But at time I feel like I had no choice  
Like enclosed in dark world voice  
So I lash out so people feel my wrath  
Not focusing on the good things I really had  
Washing my sorrow down with things I didn't need  
Hustling, getting money to feed my greed  
Getting ahead and bettering myself now this  
Was true risk that I truly miss  
So now I'm searching, looking for help  
So the risk I take now is bettering myself.

**-G**

*From The Beat: Great poem! And yeah, that's the biggest risk you'll ever take, because it means trying to do things that are new, and unfamiliar. Not everyone has the heart to make that leap, it's good to see you do.*

## Taking Chances

I've decided to write about risks. We all take chances  
whether it's for a good or bad cause. To me personally, I  
always live my life on the edge. In other words, I always  
put my freedom in jeopardy because where I'm from, we  
live our life for a cause.

I have a lot of experiences when I risked my freedom,  
like one time I almost went down for this one case I  
caught in my hood. It was a real big gang fight and there  
were a lot of stabbings involved, but besides that I almost  
went to the "Y" but I only got seven-and-a-half months,  
because I have anger issues so the judge cut me some  
slack. Well anyways that's all I got Beat, alright ya'll late.

**-Young Goofy**

*From The Beat: What's the cause you live for? We know it's loyalty to your set, but we are asking more about what that cause means to you. Is it about honor? Your future? Your family? Your success? Or is it partly connected to those "anger issues"?*



## Hard Times For Me

My mind becomes crystal clear it seems like the nonsense just disappears.

There's so many things you can learn in a year

Like knowing how to be brave

And overcoming my fears

By listening to adults by closing your mouth

And opening your ears can be your whole life souvenir.

Trust me when I tell you that

Because I live my life until now blind like a bat.

Because of my mistakes I had to be behind locked doors.

Being told when I can eat and sleep is not the life for me and neither is it for you

Unless you like when somebody tells you what to do.

Even then is that how you was raised up

To hang with a certain crew so you can look tough

But like my mom told me, life can be rough.

But all you have to do is pray and keep your head up.

I been in your shoes before, so take my advice

Before you do something stupid, think twice,

Life is too short for you to go wrong now

So try and live it with an up side down frown,

And remember that you don't have to do anything you don't want to

And that you will always have somebody that cares and loves you.

**-Darius**

*From The Beat: There's a lot of beauty and truth in this flow/poem, thank you for sharing it with The Beat. You are in a position now where you will soon be able to try and put these lessons to use. What kinds of obstacles do you think you will face, and how do you plan to overcome them? (Hey, maybe you could make that the subject of your next flow)*

## Risks I Regret, Risks I Don't

I often take risks but I don't think about the consequences till after I have took the risk. Some risks I take unconsciously and some with lots of thought and planning. Some risks I regret and some I wish I would have rethought out.

**-Dorin**

*From The Beat: This leaves us wanting to know more! What are some of the risks you regret? And what are some of the ones you thought were worth it?*

## A Set Life

Humility

To not be vexed or misguided in your daily

Stride because of feelings brought upon you by others.

A way to walk through life without trippin off others

Not a hundred percent foolproof way to stay out

Of trouble but will keep you out of conflicts

Freedom

The feeling we all yearn for

The ability to act as we please, walk out of your house,

And walk down the street without asking someone for permission

Functioning

To have the ability to live with

No time

On

Your shoulders

Figure it out before it's too late.

**-Chris**

*From The Beat: The urgency of that last line really hits home. So many young people are locked up and they're almost at the position where it's too late, but they've still got a little time to escape the clutches of the killing and the system. Do you feel like it's too late for you? Or are you ready to make your own escape?*

## Life Is What You Make It

Part 1:

My eyes open, take a choice of direction

What is this life really about, is really my only question

I see poverty, riches and different life status

But if happiness is in your heart does all this really matter?

I see righteous people doing right things, going to church

But the following day get out car and get murk

It's funny how things work

If good people can get shot then what is life really worth?

So don't stop for no one, go hard until you make it

This yo life it's only what you make it.

Part 2:

If there was a heaven or hell

I guess bein' in hell is posted in this jail cell

We do crime, come to jail, and try to get bail

And then rush the counselors every night tryin' to get mail

I'm tryin' to change my life but the devil holdin' me back

Every time I get out, hit the block, and suddenly relapse

The hood got my back cause that's where I was raised

OG's on the block taught us to get that paper stack

My young cuddies out here dyin' tryin' to be the man

Where I'm from we be on block wit' money in rubber bands

Only thing God wanna do is hold our hand

But every time we do crime we turn to the other man

What is life really worth 'cause at the end we end up in dirt?

Get money, get smacked, then your family get hurt

Yo' mama in a black dress crying and she hurt

Do you really want to end your life wit' her following your body in the hearse

RIP Mac Dre and Johnny Cash

**-Bay Childs**

*From The Beat: We wish we had answers to the questions you put down so eloquently, but we don't... although we will say this: There's too much talent behind bars, too many people who could be out there changing the world for the better, adding their voice to the human chorus to twist up the song and give it a better ending. You're one of those voices, we hope you recognize the talent in yourself and reach higher.*

*Every time I get out, hit the block, and suddenly relapse*

## Risk

My life is a risk that I must take to determine my fate.

I tried to escape but I couldn't wait,

to get the quick money that I know how to make.

Living on the edge is living on the block.

Tryin' to get some money without getting popped.

The police don't know that it's hard

Living with 11 brothers and sisters with a single mom

All you wanna do is get rid of that bomb.

I was makin' that dough all until the police hit ma do'

And told everybody to hit the flo'.

I tried to get up and go but got tasered and woke up in the hospital though. I'm changing my life as best I can to set

an example for my new best friend.

**-Mal Q**

*From The Beat: With this much skill going into your flow/you could be on the radio/forget the block, forget the streets/You need to get out and start making beats!*

## No Good Fathers

A father is a person who is supposed to be there when the child is hungry and needs guidance.

A father is someone who is supposed to provide a place to live and pay the bills.

A father is a person who is supposed to keep the child in line and out of trouble.

A father is something I never had. So my whole life growing up without my dad was all bad.

**-A-A**

**From The Beat:** The bad news is that you had to grow up without the things you need from a dad. The good news is that even so, you still have a really good idea of what good fatherhood is all about. It's like even without him to teach you, you taught yourself - keep this wonderful piece and read it when it's time for YOU to be a dad. Peace.

## A Nightmare On The Block

Another night posted at my block

Having to take care of it

Wit...a strap on my hip

Looking left, looking right

See the homie coming from my side

"What's up Dawg"

"What's up girl you read to ride"

all of a sudden we see the enemy

swingin' by

we started throwing out sets in the sky

showing no mercy just our pride

thinking in my mind is it that time to die

gotta be quick and take the strap out of my pants

before the enemy takes my one and only chance

take it out quick shootin' like a soldier

Praying to God to be all over

They're driven off, thinking I won

I see myself standin' but I'm the only one

Could it be I get down on my knees

He got shot in the chest by the enemy

It's okay homie it's gonna be alright

Letting him know he can't go without a fight

I see his eyes rolling to the back of his head

Me wishing they should of shot me instead

I hear the sirens coming

Oh shoot it's the 5-0

I can't go to jail

Can't snitch and let them know

Started running cops telling me to stop

Put my finger in the air screaming forget the cops

Jumpin' fence after fence but then I get trapped

Can't get out is it a wrap...

"Get up! Get up...it's time to clean your room"

Staff screams, Thank God I thought it was true!

I wake up knowing it was just a dream

To another day in this facility

**-Lady Happy**

**From The Beat:** This poem is terrifying - it was a dream but it's also a big part of street reality, as you already know. You told this story so well that it felt like it was happening while we read it. That's a true gift, to be a great storyteller. Use it wisely, and thanks for sharing it with The Beat! What is your plan to not find yourself in such a predicament, again aka incarceration.

*I'm gonna have a lot of support when I get out...*

## A Fool or A Father

Growing up I never really had a father.

My real father freaked out because he found out my mother was pregnant with me. It was hard for me not knowing who he was, but I do have some of the traits that he has, so my mother tells me. She says that he was a professional piano player and that he loved music, yet he ran away from me and the taxes that he had owed the government because he refused to pay.

Sometimes I wonder what it would be like if I knew him, but I'd rather not, not after what I did. So what I'm going to do is stick next to my GF, if she's pregnant and be a better father than he ever was.

**-Boot**

**From The Beat:** What are some of the traits that you share with him? Do you love music too? Do you look like him? It sounds like you're growing up to be a caring person - so maybe it's more his loss than yours, because he doesn't get to know you!

## My Risk is Doing Drugs

A big risk that I've taken in my life is doing drugs. Drugs have caused a lot of harm to me and my family. I've done things on drugs that I wouldn't normally do when I'm sober. It caused me to spend most of my teen years locked up or in different programs.

I'm 18 years old now and I still haven't got off probation. I've been on it since I was 12 and me doing drugs is why I'm still on. This time when I get out I'm gonna be off of probation and I'm gonna have to get a job and do everything a grown person is supposed to do.

I'm gonna have a lot of support when I get out, I just hope I used it this time. I hope I have the strength to "say no." I don't want to spend my adult life in and out of jail.

**-Li'l D**

**From The Beat:** We're glad to hear you have support. Do you also have a program, mentors you can trust, positive influences to keep you sober? Drop us a line and let us know how it's going!

## The Daily Risk

Everybody takes risks every day. You take a risk by just walking outside. I took a risk by doing a crime. I am lucky I didn't end up doing life. The risk I took benefited me by letting me catch up in school and passing my exit exams. Some people take risks that can help them financially.

When I took my risk, I never thought it would benefit me in any way. When I did what I did, I just wanted revenge or to get even. Everybody I know always tells me that I live close to the edge, I never knew what they meant until I pushed myself so far down that I couldn't get out. I have been living with the risk I took for 5 and a half months so far and going on for 7.

I think about what I did every day and I just say to myself that because of this I can graduate but the bad thing is this place costs a lot of money.

**-Puppy Chow**

**From The Beat:** Now that you have learned from these mistakes, do you think that you will make the changes you need to? If so, then maybe those risks will be worth it.

## Switching Shoes

Do you hear what I hear I'm rippin' my hair and tearing it out  
calling to God but he's not hearing me out  
Hitting my head against the wall  
Hard enough to make me fall into a deep sleep that gives me the creeps  
Switching shoes with me you wouldn't have a clue what to do  
Unless you live the same life as me too  
I count 1 I count 2 I count 3 and now 4,  
All of a sudden I'm in the real world.

**-Yogi Bear**

**From The Beat: We can't ever totally understand what it's like to be you/ but if you keep writing we might get a clue/Count 5, count 6 count 7 to the 8/Tell your story now, before it's too late!**

## Life Is A Risk

The reason why I say life is a risk is cause it's hard to gangbang and live a normal life, especially when you're a soldier. It's hard to live like everybody else, thinking it's all good but it ain't, we gotta watch our backs 24/7 makin' sure we don't get caught slippin' or when it's time to bust them hollows we the first one to bust. It's a risk 'cause you never know when that time will come or where you end up at home smoking a chop or getting ready to go six feet under or hearin' the judge say life and take our freedom so it's always a risk out on the streets but me that's a risk that I am willing to take 'cause in my eyes we are all goin' to be in the ground so we might as well live life to the fullest. ...

**-Christopher Columbus**

**From The Beat: Is this the life you want to stick with? Where do you see yourself in ten years? 15? 20? Because as you say, it's a hard life, and you deserve better than this.**

## I Think I'll Be A Good Father

What it do Beat! This is your neighborhood Shadow that's locked up in New Foundations. I want to first give a shout out to Taryn who helped me get through most of this. So thanks for being my friend.

When I was young, my dad barely was there! He was always with the other girl and her kids. Taking them places and spending time with them and not me. Sometimes he'll pick me up and spend time with me. So I can't say he was never there. Now I'm living with him and he's learning how to be a father.

Before I turn 18 years old, I'm planning to have a kid! I really want a daughter first before I have a son. I know I'll be a good father because I saw how mine is and I'm going to be the opposite. I'm going to be there for them, treat them right, and give them everything I can.

**-Shadow Dan**

**From The Beat: Tell us more about your plans for how to live out all these positive ideas you now have. We want to hear more about your blueprint for new successes!**

## Dignity... "Why?"

Dignity is a very important part of one's character. Without dignity, one will feel to some extent of not being equal in value against the next person. One who does not have a sense of dignity might feel self conscious when critiqued by their peers. Dignity can be a big necessity throughout one's life and one who has none can often be seen from afar.

An example of this is a woman who might dress revealing for others because she has no self dignity and might feel insecure about herself. A lot of times kids develop a sense of dignity when they are young from their parents who praise them when they do good and are not so judgmental towards them. Which also helps build their self-esteem and self-confidence. I think that a person who has dignity does care about people who judge them because you know who you are and what others think doesn't matter.

"One's dignity may be assaulted, vandalized, and mocked, but cannot be taken away unless it is surrendered." I think this quote means someone can only take away your dignity if you let them, and people are going to try to take it away but they can only have it if you let them.

Some ways that you can keep your dignity in difficult situations are situations such as these:

I. Let's say you have just been fired from your job and you are very mad at your boss who just fired you for a reason you think is unfair. Instead of cussing him out you let him know that he will never find a harder worker than you and hold your head high and leave.

II. As you are driving along the freeway on your way to work, some jerk cuts you off almost hitting your car in the process, and then has the nerve to honk at you then give you the finger to really make you mad.

One way you can keep your dignity in this tough situation is, as you and this driver meet cars side by side you just look over, smile, then wave, so that the situation does not escalate into a full blown road rage.

III. After a hard day at work, you and your boys plan to hit up a local club and have a few drinks. So after going home and changing into a fresh white suit, I call my boys and tell them I'm on my way. Finally I arrive at the club, get inside, and head straight for the VIP section.

As I walk through the crowd of people, someone elbows me causing me to spill my glass of Hennessy on my fresh white suit. As I turn to my right to see what it is I notice a drunken man stagger away. My first thought was to toss my remaining glass of Hennessy right back at him, but instead I head to me car for a quick change of jackets. I go back inside and enjoy the rest of my night with my boys.

**-Dorin**

**From The Beat: These are all great examples of how to keep your dignity. Also, they are great ways to keep your freedom! By avoiding the violent confrontation and keeping tempers in check. We bet half the people in jail would stay out if they'd listen carefully to what you say here. Do you too live by these words?**

*When I was young, my dad barely was there! He was always with the other girl and her kids. Taking them places and spending time with them and not me.*



## Diamond In The Rough

From the day of birth  
I was a diamond in the rough  
Growing up on the streets  
I quickly learned to be tough

Discharging my anger on any and everybody  
I woke up one day and said I'm gone be somebody  
Moms on drugs never knew pops  
As a child I decided the pattern must stop

As a teen I decided not to do the right thing  
Living from home to home, I became a lil' angry thing  
Knowing the game inside and out  
Playing my cards quickly never though without a doubt

Now I'm in this room and the door is locked  
I just can't turn the knob and walk out  
So now I lay here  
The judge gave me time to think

At 17 before I got too old  
I set a life plan that's better than gold  
Even in here I continue to treat myself as the woman I  
am  
Anticipating for the day to get out and begin #1 on my  
plans  
Cause the pattern is going to stop

I wake up every morning and quickly pray  
Then I walk to my mirror and listen to what I have to say  
"No matter what they say I'm gone be somebody!  
This diamond in the rough is going to come to the  
surface  
Brightly shining!"

**-Queen Pooh**

**From The Beat: This poem shines like the diamond you are becoming. Tell us more about the plans you have, step by step!**

## Risky Business

Risk is something you face head to head  
Take a risk, you may end up dead  
Risk is something you fear for life  
Risk is something to make you feel shot or sliced  
Risk is something you take everyday  
Risk is something that could lead you astray  
Risk is something that is cold or warm  
Risk is something that could lead you into harm  
Risk is something you can't take away  
Some risk will have you thinking all day  
Some risks are good, some risks are bad  
Some will leave you happy or sad  
Risk is something that will have your family scared  
Risk will make you feel like you never cared  
Risk is something we do night and day  
Takin' risks sometimes you get carried away  
Risk is powerful, and sometimes weak  
Risk will have you floatin' up a creek  
People make bad risks everyday  
Make sure that risk don't take your life away  
Risk got me where I am at  
People take risk doing crack  
Good risks are bad, bad risks are good  
So take that risk if you think you should.

**-Jaron**

**From The Beat: Wow, you just wrote that straight off the dome! We'd love to see what you come up with when you have more time. Do you write a lot of poetry and do well in school? What are some of the risks you have taken in your life?**

## Better To Have One Family

At my house it's just my brothers, my mom and my step-dad. It was good to at least have a positive role mode; but I think I would have liked to have my real dad. I've met him to times when I was a kid.

I wish things could have been different but everything turns out well when we are in God's name. I don't think he wasn't there because he didn't love me, I think it was because he thought I would be better off without him. He was doing bad things when I was born so my mom and step-dad took me away from him.

Now that I look back, it was probably better to live in one family without my dad. I think this because it's better to have one family than switching all around.

**-Jonathan**

**From The Beat: It takes a lot of maturity to write something like this, it sounds as if you've forgiven him for his mistakes. He couldn't get his life together enough to be with you, but like you say, it wasn't out of not loving you. In the meantime, you got that love from your mom and step-dad. Do you feel close to your step-dad?**

## To My Father, Can I Have An Answer?

Are you there?  
Can you come to my birthday?  
Can you teach me to ride a bike?  
Can you help me on my homework?  
On the weekend can we have fun together?  
May I get a pair of shoes for school?  
Can I please get some clothes for the upcoming year?  
Can you come talk to my teacher? He's been trippin'.  
Can you show me more love & affection?  
Can we spend more time together?  
Can you call me more?  
Would you please talk to me?  
Why are you blaming me for your mistakes?  
Do you love me?  
Am I your son?  
Are you my dad?  
Are you going to answer my questions?  
Then he says no. (silently)

**-Adventurous**

**From The Beat: What a powerful, heartbreaking poem. They say that whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger - and judging by the strength and heart in this poem, we'd have to agree. Whatever you've been through, no one can take away your own talents or skills, or the way you turned your pain into a poem that other people can feel and relate too. Peace, and keep writing!**

## Life Becomes Easy With Him

Life is hard no matter what way you put it  
You turn left and right now what do you do  
You look up to the man who can help you and stop to think  
You tell him you're ready to give up on life  
When you already know that's a lie  
You sometimes feel hopeless and want to die  
He sent his beloved son Jesus Christ  
To die for our sins and the sins we're about to commit  
When you find the way it becomes harder  
And realize it was through from the start  
So life is full of challenges so take  
It step by step and trust in him who believes  
In you every second of your life

**-Young L**

**From The Beat: Heartfelt, lovely poem... how does the faith you feel help you get through your daily life, and do you think that faith will help you keep making positive changes?**

## My Girl...

As I lay in my so-called bed in my room all I can do is think about you girl.

I miss the way we laugh and play, the look on your face when you smile girl.

You have been there for every little thing

You never stopped caring about me, you're a real solid girl.

I'm sorry for all the times I lied to you and made you mad,

But no matter what you always take me back, that's why I love you girl.

You was even real bold getting a tattoo of my name on your chest, knowing it will never come off.

That's my girl. You are the one. The girl for me I never knew it until now.

She is my girl ....no one is above her except for God

You might think I was talking about my girlfriend but no, I'm talking about my mother.

**-Twun-Twun**

**From The Beat:** You totally had us, we were sure this was to a girlfriend, and then wham! You hit us with your surprise ending. That's the mark of a true artist, we can't wait to read more of your work.

## A Fool or A Father

Well me personally, I've had a fool, not so much a father. I was born and he didn't really stay round. He came and went whenever he wanted. His only love of his life wasn't me or my mom, it was meth.

He never came just to see me he came for money or to clean up but all I know is when my boy gets here, I'm not going to act like a lil' kid I'm going to be taking care of my baby and be a real man and take care of the responsibilities of my actions to my son I'ma be known as a father not a fool!

**-Richard**

**From The Beat:** A Beat writer once told us "The problem with Meth is that it kills your soul." We are sorry that you lost your father to this terrible drug, and even sorrier for him because he lost the chance to be a father for his young son. Do you have other people in your life who have stepped in to take that father role?

## Let Me Be Me

They said I'll never be nothing

Just a young dread head

Don't go to school, always in the hall

Why can't they let me be me

I'm just a young soulja tryin' to step it up

To the major leagues

**-J-Dooski**

**From The Beat:** Who are the people who say you'll never be nothing? This poem glows with talent and passion, although, we had to cut a chunk. ... but you set your sights too low - why not take your talent and try to hit the real major leagues: Be a doctor, a lawyer, a poet, go to school, prove that you can amount to much more than just food for the system?

## Taking Risk

Everyone takes chances, which has to do with making choices. Sometimes the choices you make might be a risk you're taking. Taking a risk might involve hurting someone, or sometimes getting hurt. The biggest risk these days is probably being yourself without worrying about what your negative influences think of you!

**-Jr. Smiley**

**From The Beat:** What you say is so true! Some people seem more afraid of looking "weak" than they are of doing time, or getting hurt! It takes courage to follow your own path instead of the negative ones dug by other people.

## Life on the Edge

It is what it is

When you live life on the edge

Cryin' out for help, but it seems

That all hope is dead

I feel caged in

Locked in a world of cold

Frozen in a struggle, where all troubles

Tend to never get out

It's all a risk, this life thang

And the rain falls hard

The pain is like bleach on color

Permanently staining the heart

So I spend quiet nights dreamin'

Holdin' onto lost hope

I'll take the risk to keep goin

Even if it's a dead end road, 'cause you'll never know...

Until you risk

**-Mrt**

**From The Beat:** Wonderful poem - we hope that your own talents help you keep your hopes up when hope feels "dead". Peace, and keep the poems coming!

## Livin' Life Blinded

I been blinded from the start

A young thug with a lot of heart

I was born with nothing, grew up hopeless

Addicted to crime which made it hard to focus

I had nothing to lose, my life was a gamble

Picking up guns which I eventually learned to handle

Rolling up blunts this weed got me crazy

Contemplating stunts which indeed never phased me

I grew up with a single mother, daddy free

The reason I grew up lonely sippin' Hennessey

That became my role model in a brown bottle

Had me living life in the fast lane at full throttle

Keep your faith in God and believe in your heart

And know that everything was possible from the start

**-Tommy G**

**From The Beat:** So now that your eyes are opened wide/You gotta make changes from deep inside/When you get out and you're tempted to live your old ways/Or think for a minute that maybe crime pays/How do you plan to stay on track/So you can move forward and never come back?

## My Family Jewel: My Dad

The oldest person in my family is my dad. My dad is struggling but we still make it, sometimes it gets out of hand. I love my dad but I disrespect him a lot.

But I've learned a lot from my dad. My mom was never there, just my dad's sister and my dad. My dad and my aunts play an important role in my life but I'm on drugs, so I steal from them and buy thizzz... but above that I still love them I'm just caught up in drug life, tryin' to do right tryin' to have God save me ....but it ain't workin'.

I keep letting go but now I gotta hang on 22 days left and I'm back out in the world and now I realize it's time to do right, time to have my family jewel back in my life and that's my dad.

**-Jesse**

**From The Beat:** We're sorry about what you've been through. It sounds painful - are you planning to join any kind of support group to help you kick the drugs that have separated you from your loved ones? Do you feel ready to quit?

### The Lady, My Cousin

Why do guys decide to act like they love girls but treat them bad after three months.

The first month they always start off sweet and cool because they know that love is what you're missing. Where does the hurt come from? It comes from being born in prison and your mother leaving you all alone.

It starts when your mother decides to choose the pipe over you. The neglect, the heartache begins when your mother loses all four of her kids to the game and leaves me, the oldest, to hold things down for brother and sister and off into the foster system we go.

Being in this system is no joke. At five-years old being told you're ugly because you're black isn't right.

Finally my cousin took us in. She decided we would get the love we always needed.

I am 16 years old and I was with her for eleven years.

11 years with a lady known as my cousin who made us call her mom, weird huh?

I could say it was 11 years of pain.

11 years of abuse.

11 years of neglect.

11 years of terror.

11 years of pain.

11 years of worry

11 years of just plain anger and low self-esteem.

I was a cutter to release the pain.

I was a prostitute to find love because I couldn't find it at home.

I was a lot of things but I am not going to let "I was" be what I am to become.

October 1st was the worst day of my life. The lady who took me in passed away.

My cousin, my love was hard on me because she didn't want me to have a kid and treat my kid like my mother treated me.

It took me 5 months from her death to realize she was the gift of my life. The mother I had, has been put to death. She's sleeping and living in a better place. I love you mom. Rest in peace.

**-Sixteen years, Fresno**

**From The Beat: Losing a relative hurts so much! Part of you will always be missing with her. Thank you for telling The Beat about this tragic loss. Take good care of your heart.**

### Foolish Girl

I was once a foolish girl over a boy I knew 'cause I thought I was in love.

Foolish of me to think he would ever love me for who I am, foolish of me to fall for his games.

It was foolish of me to keep going back to him.

How foolish of this girl to continue to listen to his lies.

Shame on me to allow this man to beat me.

How can I just let this happen to me?

Foolish of me not to kick him out of my life.

Foolish of me to still love him.

When I know he only wants me for what I can give him.

Foolish of me to let him take what's mine.

Foolish of this girl not to stop him in his tracks.

This foolish girl sits behind these very walls and looks foolish.

I want to know, did this foolish girl change?

Will I know for a fact that the foolish girl changed her ways?

That foolish girl was me.

**-Tilly, Alameda**

**From The Beat: Many smart women have looked back on a relationship and felt foolish for putting up with the things they did. You are not alone in this. It is actually really exciting that you have gained this wisdom as a very young woman! You have a clear sense of how you want to feel in a relationship. Do what you need to do to keep this guy out of your life, and move on knowing that you now know what you want in a partner, how you want to be treated, and that your life is yours.**

### Ashanti

Ashanti I know you miss yo' dad and I'm missing you too Even though you far away I'm always thinking of you baby boo

I be here to let you know that I care And no matter what happens shanty baby I'll always be there

I'm in the air I'm juggling like five things at once

And I know you probably seen him in months

Just listen up I want just to know that I love you

And no matter what Shanty I'm gonna place nothing above you

Not here to shove you not here to hurt you Shanty-bo I put you first

I'm gone love even after six feet up in the dirt in a hearse

Shanty-bo you need my world spinning

And I promise everyday that I'm a keep my girl grinning

No time for women but so much time to spoil daughter

And the thought of someone say something boils my water

I am your father I love you girl

I want you to know it and I promise every day I'll try my hardest to show it.

I will not blow it my promises I promise I'll keep 'em

And don't worry 'bout them haters Shanty daddy will

sleep 'em

No time for speaking I love you too much

Words can't express and I'll love you always

Even through my success

You are the best my baby

It's driving me crazy

You are my biggest secret

I ain't even tell my old lady

Don't be so shady and don't you cry

I'll sing you a lullaby I'm here for you always will be until the day I die

Chorus:

You're my babe

You're the one I'll save

Baby don't sweat that I belong to you

You belong to me baby

Don't worry I'll be back

'Cause I'm your spider man

I'm the one who can

The one who'll do that I belong to you

You belong to me

Baby don't worry I'll be back

**-Eugene, Alameda**

**From the Beat: These words of love you sing to your daughter are truly inspirational - now just make sure you get out soon, so you can be the daddy she deserves and sing her to sleep every night!**



## Corruption In The System? You be the Judge

This is for all those people who are locked up and not getting by. I believe it when nowadays people say, "Oh, the system is corrupted." All our people are getting locked up for petty "shhh," like getting a dirty drug test or stealing liquor or refusing to go to school when you know your school is a war zone every day.

Not too long ago my buddy was at a boot camp nearby. He told me that every day was a test for him, that everyone was testing his faith and his pride. He told me that a lot of times it was the officers too! He told me that a few times he was maced for almost no reason, and the officers made it look like he was the "a--hole." He told me that one time he was on his way to the school over there when confronted by an officer that he was messing around when he wasn't. But the thing was that the officer told him to change out into recruit gear and gave him a citation for almost nothing which would freeze his time so he'll have to stay longer.

As they were walking, my friend was telling him that he didn't do anything and the officer said he was a liar and my friend murmured to himself not meaning for it to be heard.

He said, "This is 'bullshhh'."

The officer stopped him, yelled at him, telling him, "What did you say?"

The officer didn't give him a chance to speak, told him to get at attention. While he was standing at attention perfectly still (known as his "safe zone") the officer maced him anyway while yelling "Yard check."

I think this is a perfect example of a corrupted system and untrained officers. I think that because my friend never got into trouble over there he told me that he went to boot camp determined to change, and officers kept messing with him, messing with his time just because of his "jacket" or file. He ended up getting re-booked and getting out way later than he was supposed to. Again the system figured a way to break down another human being who was determined to do great.

**-N, Fresno**

**From The Beat:** Yes, history has proven again and again that "the system" has shortfalls and has been corrupt in whole or in part at some time in the past, at the present time and most likely will be again in the future somehow, some way, somewhere. However, we don't consider testing positive for drugs, stealing liquor or stealing anything else to be "petty." How do we protect all the children and staff in schools that have become war zones? Does it start from within or without? Should we all be responsible for ourselves and our behavior? What happens when we are not? Yes, if this was the case, the "officer" should have been reprimanded, fired, punished, de-badged. Untamed ego in the workplace or anywhere else should not have to be tolerated, especially by kids in the hall who need reassurance and guidance and people they can look up to.

## A Fool Indeed

Do I feel like a father or a fool? Right now, I feel like a fool. The day before my house got raided, I found out my ex-girlfriend is pregnant.

My opinion is that she should have an abortion. Right now, I'm facing attempted murder charge, so I won't see the baby born, or even grow up.

I can't even keep my life straight how am I going to support a child. Me, I'm always missing, in and out of jail and hurting my loved ones.

Hopefully this is the changing point in my life. I know this will change me in a good way. I always wanted a child. A child changes people's lives. I think I was counting too much on the child to change my life, and not too much on myself. I'm just wishing everything turns out the way it should.

**-Inthavong, Santa Clara**

**From The Beat:** You deserve another chance to prove yourself. Keep your strength very active and your beliefs that someday you'll get out to be the man you are/want to be. Sometimes, we make mistakes that teach us lessons that help us in our lives for the rest of our lives. That's what's happening to you. We hope life gives you another chance, the chance you need to provide a good living, future and love to your new family. We've been studying your new behavior and we got to the conclusion that you really deserve another chance. We all make mistakes and that's what makes us human-beings.

## Lesson Learned

This is my third time in here at the hall. Hopefully I get out soon. I'm not glad that I'm here, but the experience I have for the third time will really help me in the outs.

I realized that the friends I hung out with were not the friends for me to have. We were up to no good. I realized all I really got is my family.

When I get out, I'm going to work and going to college. And that is a promise! I'm going to help my mom out to pay the bills.

Gang banging, smoking and drinking is a waste of time. I pray every night that I get out soon. I think I deserve one more chance. Because of my goals I get are good, school, work, and family time.

I'm going to make sure I stay out of trouble once I get out. Just like my PO says "remember how you feel right being locked up, and when you about to do something wrong, just have that thought in your mind."

Indeed that's what I'm going to do. I'm tired of stressing my parents out. I'm tired of seeing tears come down their cheeks. That hurts me so much, I admit I do cry, because my parents are always there for me, through thick and thin and they will always love me. They go out of their way just to visit me and pay for my restitutions. That hurts me a lot, but when I get out I'll pay them back by helping them out and be a wonderful son to them. I love you mom, I love you dad, I love you Cathy (little sister). You guys are my life and I'm sorry for all the pain I put you guys through. But once I'm out of here, I'll be with you guys again, and I promise to do right and always be there for you guys like you do for me. I love you!

**-B, Santa Clara**

**From The Beat:** Very touchy piece! Having these positive thoughts, you damn sure deserve another chance. We are glad that you have realized what your supposed friends are. It takes a lot experience, years in jail, and it takes so much pain and loneliness for someone to realize this. You have gotten there. What really opened your eyes? Always keep in mind what your PO said. This person seems like want the best for you. It's time to leave the bs from your past behind, and start leaving a new life. You and your family deserve a new life. You have people who worry about you and it's time to consider their pain, stress and tears. Don't you think so? Good luck!

## A Fool Of A Dad

When I was a child my dad was my hero.

I didn't know why but to him I was never a zero.

He would come home from work and cill

Always kick it with me after a meal.

He would take me everywhere

Showing me that he really cared.

Giving our family the world,

Never crossing my mind we were so poor.

Things changed dramatically,

Because in our home there would then  
be no hospitality.

Went on a long vacation,  
came back with no expectations.

He just decided to bounce  
getting all his shhh together running  
faster than a mouse.

It really hurt me then but it was whatever.

Growing up was the same but without a father.

Livin' life to the fullest,

waiting to have kids to show them what a real man is.

Because they're not gonna go through this.

**-Lil' R, Santa Clara**

**From the Beat:** It seems as if you're learning from the mistakes that your dad made. Being a parent is about being there and being the best for the child, not just seeming like a cool guy. If you remember that and you are committed, I'm sure you'll make a great father.

### A Fool Or A Father

What's up with The Beat? You know we holdin' it down just like a "spidiot" (a stupid idiot) 'cause I'm still here. I can't wait 'til I get out. But my question I ask myself: am I ready to touch down? Am I ready to hit the streets, be with my thugs, be with all the girls and drugs? And I say hell yeah I'm ready fa that action!

I got about ten more weeks to be around these ninjas, then I'm back to my neck of the woods. But check it out though, it's hella hard out there in them streets. I gotta eat, I gotta take care of my family. I wanna be a good father, not no darn fool like I've been and like my father is being right now. I'm 18 right now, and my dad ain't been around since I was about eight! That's a decade ago. What is he doing? Uhhh . . . You tell me. I have not talked to him in a couple of years.

He's in the pen right now and he ain't getting out for another four years or so. That's only if the parole board mess with him? Should I been mad at him? Hell yeah I should be mad, and I am mad at him. I got pain in my heart 'cause he left moms hangin'. Moms had to take care of all five of us.

And I can't forget Grams. She helped moms to the fullest with no questions asked. I desire pops ready to man up when he get out 'cause I'm ready to forgive him for all his wrong doings. I am going to challenge him to make sure he's really ready to be the man he was put on this earth to be. And with that I'm out until we meet again.

**-Young Mari, San Francisco**

*From The Beat: Why do you think there are so many children being raised without fathers in their lives? We can understand why you have some anger toward your dad, and we admire you for wanting to be the father to your child that you never had. But be very careful. You will need to work at being the father you want to be. Actually, all responsible fathers have to work at staying responsible, because sometimes running is the easiest thing to do. Don't forget what it was like for you, and do right by your children. Good luck!*

### One Day Closer

My eyes close and sick deep within this daze

Only to awake and resume my wicked ways

One day close to hell where my sins will prevail

Waitin' in vain, slowly my venom takes aim

Revives from being tamed causing pain with no shame

Demon on my shoulder, my sangre's (blood) getting colder

Enemigas (enemies) wanna die, unleash the madness, let's ride

My havoc invades, injecting fear to their veins

All sanity drains and muerte (death), the sky rains

Bloodwashed lungs screamin', insanity still fiendin'

Diablos (devils) rage steamin', toxic smoke I'm breathin'

Vapors deceiving my sight, reforming my dreams to life

Demonic arson in disguise, destruction is the prize

Days passing me by, hells image nearing my eyes

Gangbangin' my side, eternal, my soul will ride

Skulls crack and divide releasing the poison inside

One day closer to the depths of hell to reside

**-Grumpy, San Francisco**

*From the Beat: What can we say that we haven't already said? Your commitment to "unleash the madness" is exactly what the system is designed for. It's ready for you, eager for you to keep up the insanity so they can slam you deeper and longer, letting you know that they can match your insanity with their own; no matter how much firepower you assemble, they can always assemble more. What the system is not designed for is intelligence, a thoughtful plan, the revenge of success. But then, even though you've got the intelligence to create your own cause rather than to follow someone else's, as you do, it appears you're not designed to lead — except to lead yourself down a deep and depressing hole. The Beat loves your poetry, but doesn't want to be publishing it for years to come while you rot in a state prison cell!*

### A Fool Or A Father

Personally, I know I will be a great father. Why? Because I been in and out of foster homes since I was 16 months old. I know everything that will be needed of me to be a great father.

I didn't really have the ideal father. I mean, he tried his best, so that's all I could ask for. As long as your parents try, that's all you could ask for. As long as they try, that's good enough.

But me, I'ma be there for my kids. I'm going to be there their whole life, not just a little part of it. 'Cause I know if my mom and dad would have been in my whole life, I woulda came out different. I probably wouldn't have ended up in here hella times! But it happened for a reason. Feel me?

I wouldn't be me if all this in my life didn't happen! I'd be a whole different person with a whole different life. So, I'm kinda glad my life was messed up, 'cause now I know what I got to do to have my kids have a good life! And I'ma give them everything I had and what I didn't have, and even mo'!

Like I said, I'ma be a great dad! One of the best, feel me! But a'ight Beat, I'm out. Gotta go back to the box! Whiteboy out!

**-Whiteboy, San Francisco**

*From The Beat: You have a very healthy outlook about your future and your family's future. Of course, what kids need from their parents more than anything else is for them to be there with them as they grow up. We don't know what you did to get here, but we believe you when you say that from this experience you know what not to do from now on.*

### My Son's Room

A place where I can be safe would be my son's room. My son's room makes me feel safe, 'cause everything that in it is pure. There is no anger no violence. He makes me feel like nothing can happen to me 'cause to me he is like my little angel watching over me. He also makes me feel safe 'cause he will never hurt me in any way.

When I need a place to get away I would go to his room and talk to him about how I feel 'cause no matter what he would never look at me wrong. He is the most pure thing I have in this world.

**-Ivan, Santa Clara**

*From The Beat: What a beautiful writing you have submitted this week. Thank you. Many readers of The Beat have children, but do you think they cherish their child's role in the same way that you do? Sounds like you have been waiting for someone just like your son—someone who is kind and open.*

### My Update

Wha'sup Beat? This is your girl Terchá aka Angel. I just wanna update y'all on what's going on with me. Well, I go back to court on July 28, and it looks like I'm going home. After all I been through, after these groups home, it's time to settle down. I know when I go home I'm not gone mess it up because I have a plan.

My plan is to get back into school, get a job, and be a normal teenager again. This street life get so old. Once you get sucked in completely to that life, it's so hard to get out. I realized that. I am getting out before it gets too late. I've seen what it can do, and I don't want that to happen to me. I am better than that.

I refuse to degrade myself any longer. I believe I have potential to be successful.

**-Treachá Wilson, San Francisco**

*From The Beat: That potential to be successful is clear and present in this piece. It seems like you've done some important growing up. You have looked around you and decided what you don't want and what you do want, and have set out a very simple but very effective plan to get what you want. We congratulate you! You are moving out of childhood and into responsible young womanhood!*

### A Happy Time

(chorus)

A happy home? Man, what's that  
Is it because you went up in her without a hat  
All I've ever known, my pops rollin' stone,  
While moms was left at home  
To raise me on her own  
(Verse1)  
Ever since I was a seed  
My pops was a destiny  
I gave my life to the streets  
And some ninjas I called my peeps  
My mom and the street that ever raised me, crazy  
I want a child and a wife to say they love me  
I'm more than half the man of my pops could ever be  
To prove him wrong about me  
I put numerous ninjas' face on white tall tee's  
When I walked through my cell door I drop to my knees  
Begin, "Please return me to the streets"  
When I walk through the brown court doors I see my  
mom's face  
Written all over, it was embarrassment and disgrace  
If I could turn back the hands of time  
I would have never did that dreadful crime  
(Chorus)  
A happy home? Man, what's that?  
Is it because you went up in her without a hat  
All I've ever known, my pops rollin' stone,  
While moms was left at home  
To raise me on her own  
(Verse2)  
I wish my baby to rest in peace.  
If she was still living,  
Would she be cursed to a life full of hell with a parent  
like me?  
I don't know, but if so it would be  
Because of her immediate family  
I've cried countless nights and raised hell countless days  
And being incarcerated only builds on that rage  
A happy home? Will I never find one?  
I don't know but I wish my daughter was still alive  
for me to rock her asleep and say, "No more cryin',  
Hun."

**-Brandon, Santa Clara,**

*From The Beat: Even though we hate that you have had to grow up as you have, we love that you have been able to turn this unnecessary pain into great art! As painful as it may be to read, your loss is our gain. (Like they say, one man's trash is another's treasure...) A happy home is seldom as happy on the inside as it may appear on the outside, so we don't want you to idealize the "perfect" family too much. On the other hand, you absolutely deserve a happy home, and now it will be up to you to make one. We wish it was as easy as whispering, "No more cryin', Hun," but we know there will be tears to come. We pray only that they become fewer and fewer as you build that happy home.*

### Hear Me Out

Lord please hear when I'm callin'  
I know it's because of the hell that I was causin'  
Let that be the reason that I'm fallin'  
I pray every night for change  
But is heaven right for me when I'm deep in the game  
Am I still the same or am I different 'cause I'm yellin'  
Was Pac the only one to blame  
Just because he put many ninjas to shame  
And yeah, I blame all the women up in this piece  
For given their babies' lives to these cruel streets

**-Brandon, Santa Clara**

*From The Beat: We think that praying for change in your life is a good place to start. But why blame the women whose sons keep these streets cruel? Where does personal responsibility start?*

### I'm Gonna Survive

Sitting here at Juvenile Hall, looking at these four  
white walls.

Nothin' to do, nothin' to say.

See the same damn people and the same faces every  
single day.

Can't escape, can't get out. It makes me want to shout.

And now I can't say I've never been locked up.

Now I can't say that I stayed out of trouble and I stayed  
away from all this.

But, now I can say to my kids one day this is not the  
place to be;

there's more to it then what's on T-V

It's not worth it, a complete waste of time of your life.

I thought I would never make it out plus everybody be  
counting me out, and I'm just thinking what's that all  
about man.

And I say what I always say "you can count me out,  
doubt I'm gonna make, gonna survive."

I'm gonna live my life, I'm gonna fight for my strive and  
I'm gonna make it every day and every night.

But people don't believe and people want to see all the  
potential hidden inside of me but that's not what this is  
about.

It's about me getting out one day and on that day I'll say  
that I've made it.

I've survived now I'm free to live my life.

Don't ever count me out .

Don't ever put me down or start tossing me around.

Thinkin' I won't make a sound and your already know  
you can count me out, but no doubt I'm gonna make,  
gonna survive.

I'm gonna live my life, I'm gonna go and fight for my strive  
every day and every night. Yeah I'm gonna survive.

**-Nick, Fresno**

*From The Beat: Nick, this is great writing!! Keep it up! Maybe you can't say anymore that you've stayed out of trouble, but it sounds like you've learned from this experience. We encourage you to choose not just to survive, but to thrive and grow. We're confident that one day you will be able to tell your kids there's more to life than this.*

### The Risks I took

Hey I'm a fourteen year old female from Fresno.

The biggest risk I took was living on the streets selling  
my body. The risk is you never know who you are getting  
in the car with or who's house it is or if they have STD's  
or something. When I get out I've decided to stop and try  
to get some help. It's very hard to stop because all you  
think about is the money.

Some people say it's disgusting but I found a way to  
hustle my own money without help from anybody. But I  
lose total respect for my body and I hurt the people who  
love me the most. It also hurts in the end to know that  
the people you were selling your body for don't care about  
you as a person, only how much money you make.

I've decided I shouldn't waste my time with guys that  
don't care about me or what happens to me. I'm going to  
spend more time with my family who love me and who  
only want the best for me.

I'm trying to tell all of you whoever read this, never  
get into this. It is really addictive and hard to stop and  
sometimes you can't stop even if you want to. So please  
don't get into it. It hurts you and your family the most.  
That's the biggest risk I've ever took.

**-Sierra, Fresno**

*From The Beat: That's scary. We hope you never go back to that way of life. You have so much good to offer. We wish you all the success you deserve! Tell us how you are breaking this addiction? What steps are you taking? Good luck out there, and remember play it safe.*



### Harassed and Abuse

I have been locked up five times now since the age of twelve to seventeen. I never had much structure at home, and all the rest is pretty stereotypical of the modern day criminal. Mom was on drugs, Dad is nutso, and I had to try my best to raise myself but failed time and time again.

This story isn't just about me, though. It is the story of millions of instances and situations which are commonplace in today's inner city ghettos, "hood", and even some middle-class American communities.

It could happen in many variations, take many forms, but is generally based upon the same principle subject: Police harassment and abuse. The following is an example of just one of these oddly numerous situations.

I had broken into a house. It was my first major crime aside from petty thefts, marijuana use, and fights at school. Plus, it was the first time I was arrested. I stole a bunch of jewelry from a neighbor and when the cops came a knockin', my parents go to talkin'. They searched me up and down and found the jewelry. Then they made me turn it over to the police. I gave them everything I had stolen, which was more than they had found.

Even after this, and apologizing, pleading and beggin' for anything but time in Juvie, the police just punked me. Instantly they turned from the friendly neighborhood cops into rage-filled monsters. After a barrage of insults they "securely" fastened the metal cuffs around my small, twelve-year old wrists. I was scared at that point, which they only made worse on the drive to booking. "You know, I hope they take that ass when you get in there, you little shhhh!" And so on. Was how they felt, I guess.

We got to booking and I was sitting in a cell until they moved me into the general population.

That officer does not realize what effect his words had on me at that time, when I was put in general pop. I did all I could to stay alone, which only got me into more and more trouble. That trouble still affects prejudices against me today in the courtroom, on the street with officers and I am now fueled by a deep hate for officers because of experiences like this one and way worse ones I have gone through.

**-Jared, Fresno**

**From The Beat:** We wish that first police officer had realized you were still a scared kid at age twelve, and had spoken differently to you. But he didn't. Now it's up to you—will you let his poor choice control the rest of your life, or will you choose differently? Your writing is thoughtful and insightful—you are able to look at a bigger picture than just your own experience. That tells us you have a sharp mind and the ability to succeed at helping others. We hope you use those skills to make a difference for yourself and other kids who need structure and guidance.

### Rest in Peace William

Well it's my second time in JJC. I would like to talk about my dad.

He was born September 24, 1971. He was a loving and caring Dad. He has 5 kids, all from the same lady, my mom Katherine.

I'm 14 yrs old and my dad passed away July 9th 2007 and I really miss him a lot. My dad was a mechanic for about 20 yrs.

The thing I remember most and love about my dad was that he was funny. One time last year on my birthday, he planned my birthday party with a bounce house and he came up behind me and smashed cake all in my face. Then I got him back with ice cream and cake. It was funny and we had a huge cake-fight with all my friends. It made my house really messy but at least we had fun. That was the last and funniest memory I had with my dad.

**-Amethy, Fresno**

**From The Beat:** Thanks for sharing your personal memory with the Beat. We are sorry for your loss.

### LOVE

Have you ever been in love where all you feel is the pain?

You trusted them to love you but they took it as a selfish game.

Played with your emotions and you know what to expect,

but all you cared about was help, so the hurt wouldn't be so bad.

My mind told me to let go, my heart told me to hold on. This pain won't vanish or disappear.

Am I?...

What's going wrong?

Have you ever felt like screaming to let the sadness drip?

Punch the walls fervently as you cry and bit your lip! I have.

And I hate to say love is pain.

But it is a rough ass game but I allowed myself to continue it.

The hurt, the pain, the lies I don't care because it's love. I can't say one last good bye.

This is love for you no more question to be asked.

Have you ever been in love?

What kind of question is that?

**-Aaron, Fresno**

**From The Beat:** Wow, Aaron, you express so well how every one of us has felt at least once in our lives. Great poetry! Love does hurt many times, but if we never love because we are afraid of being hurt, we miss the chance for happiness. Don't be afraid to share your heart and emotions with people and take the risk that comes from loving someone.

### Getting Down

The biggest risk I ever took was getting down with my set.

But I don't regret that shhh one second of my life. I saw my brother get killed in front of my eyes when I was a young teen. That's what made me want to be down. I picked up where he left off. He was a real OG, not like a lot of these fake ass ninjas out there saying something they don't know shhhh about.

But in the end he paid the highest price, with his life. I ain't gone never stop banging, I can't so it comes to my mind that yea I'll probably end up the same way, if not in prison doing real time. But I'm in it too deep, so to y'all young ninjas who still got a chance take the easy way out homes!

I ain't trying to act like I'm the hardest ninja alive, but I know my shhhh I was born into my set. My mom and pops were both down with the set, both are doing hard time. My mom serving life for a dope case, my pops is doing three consecutive life sentences for triple murder, so I got a lot of ideas of where my life could easily be in a few years. If you get down, represent your shhhh to the fullest, and be ready to die for it.

But if you decide to take your chances on the outs, enjoy every second you're still breathing, because tomorrow ain't promised.

**-Birdy, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** We appreciate the honesty and emotion in this piece. Does everyone in your family bang? Do you stay in touch with your father and mother? Do you think your mother wants to lose another son? In this piece, we see you trying to reach out to younger people to go a different route... is that true? Is there some small part of you that wishes you had other choices? Because we believe you do - and what's more, we believe that if your brother were alive today, he'd say "don't go the way I did."

### California Detention Centers

In today's society we are all faced with everyday struggles. Some may argue that in a capitalist society everyone has a chance to make what they want of their life. This statement is true but nothing in this world is that simple. Not everyone is given the same starting line. While one child may have all the resources he needs: a stable home, a good education etc, another child may be faced with poverty, bad schools etc. Therefore not everyone has an equal opportunity in life.

Some children are set back from the start. A child whose mother cooks for him every night has no worries about food. Another child who might not be as fortunate might have to steal something from the market to eat. Some criminals are forced by their circumstances to commit crimes, and if they are caught and thrown in a detention center with other criminals it gets no better. Studies show that people who go to jail are more likely to come back then when they first arrived.

In other words, putting a bunch of "bad" kids together doesn't rehabilitate them it actually makes them worse. Therefore the California Justice System is a failure. As I write this essay in juvenile hall at 2500 Fairmont San Leandro CA, I can personally attest that this place doesn't make anyone better. The record of lawsuits against the CYA (California Youth Authority) speaks for itself. As a matter of fact so many lawsuits have been filed against the CYA that they had to change their title.

One story I've heard of is how come kids hung themselves in their own cell due to the environment meant to rehabilitate them in the CYA. Not to mention the all to common stories of assaults and rapes that occurs in California Detention Centers. There is no easy solution to these problems but awareness must be raised.

I believe the solution is economically based, poverty creates crime, therefore we must look at the capitalist system we live in and make tweaks. Truly yours from Alameda County Juvenile Hall

**-Faraz, Alameda**

*From the Beat: You've addressed important, difficult, and relevant problems in an incredibly coherent way. We're happy that you're writing about this, because you, being in juvenile hall, have a firsthand experience, and making your accounts and experiences public, will help bring more attention to these problems. You support you're your ideas with relevant examples, which is just another representation of your talent as a writer. When you get out, you can make the opportunity to fight against these injustices that you see. Make sure your voice is heard.*

### Missing Her

The biggest risk I've had to take in my life was having to walk out of my little sister's life, the reason that I choose to do that was because I was messing up big time.

I was lost out on the streets of Fresno and still am. I didn't want my sister to see the person I had become, a monster.

My sister used to look up to me. I was her idol. Walking out on her was the hardest and most painful thing I've done but I want allow myself to see her not until I get myself together.

People tell me if I love her so much then why don't I change my lifestyle. My response is if I can't do it for myself so how can I do it for her? But I know what one day I'll see her and be the same big sister I was when we were kids.

**-B, Fresno**

*From The Beat: Thank you for being honest and sharing with us. We hope you can reconnect with your sister and start building your relationship again and we hope you can help yourself.*

### The Rush

What up Beat today's topic is about the risk all of us take by banging in the streets. Walking down the street is a big rush, and you never know when a rival might go down your hood and start shooting at you. Even if they don't have a gun they can still walk up and stab you, especially if your awareness is down.

We even take risk when we're smashing with the homies. We see a rival gang member and we kill him -- then we're facing 25 to life. That's a risk. Then we risk retaliation from a rival if we do kill another. Our risk never ends.

Life's a risk. I'm risking 25 to life in the ride and you ask me why I do this I respond with a mind half gone for the fact I'm gang related.

**-Lil' Silent, Santa Clara**

*From The Beat: Good writing. It's almost like you're addicted to a drug, and that drug is the rush of danger with your boys. We can see how it might have a hold on you, but like all drugs, there is a terrible price to pay. Have you really sat down and thought about what 25 to an L might mean? Or what it might mean to be shot up and in a wheelchair? Because we'd hate for you to have those thoughts too late.*

### From the inside out

The fire that burns within  
Vs. the beautiful atmosphere  
Growing up with out a father  
And my mother is hardly ever there  
Though I know she cares  
She has problems she needs to work on  
I grew up in a life that not even God can change  
My thoughts are wrong  
I know through the dark night my eyes glow  
The blood within my body neither clean nor pure  
So I roam the streets hungry looking for the cure  
I rob and steal at the point to kill  
And no I don't care  
But is it really my parent's fault  
Because they aren't there.

**-Young Stone, Alameda**

*From The Beat: You were put in a position where you were given more responsibility than a lot of kids your age. Instead of channeling your frustration through crime, take pride in the fact you know how to take care of yourself. We know you have the means to take responsibility, so show others that you contain that attribute.*

### I Feel You, Believe That

If you ever lost yo' brother,  
I feel you  
judge sentences you, just got you a Y-A commitment  
I feel you  
20 years to life 'cause you just took a life  
I feel you  
Everything go wrong when it was just 'bout to go right  
I feel you  
Livin' in that street life, out all night, hustling that  
white, earning them stripes  
I feel you  
Ridin' around getting high, go broke ready to cry,  
wake up in the morning got you feelin' like, why go rob  
an' kill like, least I'm still alive  
I feel you, believe that.

**-Lil' Dirt, Alameda**

*From The Beat: Thank you for expressing all that you have in this piece. It seems you've lived a tough life, but that doesn't mean you should give up. We believe that even though you've dealt with all of this, you can look toward the future, and work to make it better. We want you to keep writing; what you've shown here is some impressive poetry. Can't wait to read more.*

## A Horrible Excuse For A Man

My father is a horrible excuse for a man. He has always treated me inhumane. He has always either compared me to our dog or treated our dog better than he treated me. He always called me names a father should never call their nine-year-old daughter. He has always beat be from 5-11 years old. He got arrested for hitting me with a newspaper like I was a dog. But it doesn't matter now, because he's dying from AIDS. I just wish he would die sooner.

But my fiancée is nothing like my father. He would never do any of my future children like my father did me and his father did him. He will always love and support our unborn children and always be there for them. I love you Nuty Baby for always being there for me when things have been the hardest for me. Thank you for asking me to marry you and spending the rest of your life with me because I need you more than anything in my life.

But my father is a horrible excuse for a man. My man is the most loving person in the world.

**-Redbone, San Francisco**

*From The Beat: If a grown man verbally abuses his nine-year-old child and beats her, then that nine-year-old is more grown up than he is. He's remained an irresponsible little boy all these years, a bully who beats up on those smaller and weaker than him! Indeed, he is "a horrible excuse for a man," because he isn't a man at all! We wish you and your fiancé the best luck, but you'll need more than luck. Be very careful, both of you, because the model that you have for raising children is a bad one, and that is a danger signal for your own upcoming experience as parents. We know you want to be the best parents you can be, but we also know that it takes real commitment and real work not to react to children the way you've been "taught" to react.*

## I Don't Know Where To Begin

There's so many risks so I don't know where to begin.

Why is so many people gettin' killed in revenge?

My ninja Junior just got killed in the pinto

My cousin killed my other cousin that's shady- yo

Plus ma brother baby mama just had another baby.

I get out in a couple of days. That's what hatin"

Will I get knocked down or will I live ever-lastin'

A whole lot of people talkin' 'bout they want to gas me

I look in they eyes and start laugh-laugh-laughin'

When I get out I ain't never comin' back

I put that on nothing man I promise you that

**-Jamoni, Alameda**

*From the Beat: In this short flow you make us all feel what you go through, and feel the stress too. But you end on a statement of inspiration and determination to rise above any and all "hatin'." We hope you achieve it and raise your station, so you can move up in your situation!*

## The Family Jewel

My dad at first used to be an alcoholic. Up until three years ago, he used to be a bad father. He used to get mad for no reason and take his anger out on me, his only son. When he hit me, I would hit him back, and that wasn't a good bond.

Then one day he was drunk and he hit my mom. He got arrested for a couple of months, and I missed him. Then when he came back, he didn't drink. Since then he started being a family jewel.

Now, he never lays a hand on me, and no matter what happened in our past, I still and will always love him, because he's my father.

**-Dillon, San Francisco**

*From The Beat: What this upbeat piece reminds us is that people are capable of change. Alcohol is a difficult drug to avoid, so we admire his strength of character for recognizing that he had to make a choice, and for making the right one. Now, it's up to you to show your strength of character through the choices that you make.*

## Risk

In everybody's life, there's plenty of risk and sacrifices you take and need to take! But anyways, I'll tell you, the biggest risk I ever took was bangin'.

Ever since I was a younger, a lil' homie in middle school, I would get in trouble with other dudes that claimed to gang bang. But then as I got a little older, meeting older homeboys and my OGs, I learned newer interesting information I needed to know. So I always watch my back in the outs.

I'm not gonna be down as hell, thinking I'm bulletproof or invincible, feel me? It just doesn't happen like that.

Sometimes people think bangin' is just fun, which it can be if you associate with the right people. But it's not always getting high and goin' to parties. If there's something crackin' and you don't participate, you automatically have a jacket or a label. Not a very good one!

You gotta sacrifice, and take some major risks in life, feel me? But hey, it's all G-DOUBLE -O-D, GOOD!!

Much love and respect to all the homies. Keep your heads held high!

**-Smirk, Santa Clara**

*From The Beat: We see how easy it is to slide into banging, even without really trying, when you're young and looking to the OGs for your direction. But now you're much too smart to be taking your "marching orders" from anyone but yourself — and that includes both shot callers and counselors! It appears that you've put yourself in a position where any move is a risk. So, which is worth more to you, risking more time under the control of institutional strangers (or worse), or getting a "jacket or a label" that you've walked away from the gang?*

## It's Never Too Late

Fathers ... nowadays most are fools, but every now and then you can find a good one. Unfortunately, mine is doing life in prison. I've never met him but have heard stories of him.

My dad was heavy into gangs and was hardly ever around for my mom. My mom married him but on their wedding night he ran off with some other girl. My mom cried all night and eventually forgave him (I still don't know why).

Soon after that he started beating my mom.

He got locked up in county jail for his third strike before I was even born. My mom had me while my "dad" was still in county jail. He got sentenced when I was three years old. His sentence was 26 years to life.

I found out he was doing life when I was 16. I've always told myself "Never be like him; be better and support my family. Do something with my life."

When I got locked up I thought I failed, but through the years I realized it's never too late to change the way you're traveling.

So when I have kids, I'm not gonna be a fool. I'm gonna be a father. Now I ask you: What and who are you gonna be?

**-Oscar, Fresno**

*From The Beat: You present a challenge for our readers to think about. Unfortunately, not enough of us ponder this question before we begin making babies. We hope that all of you future parents will strive to be good dads to your kids and families, and not just become more men who father children. We appreciate that your opening sentence was upbeat in that sometimes "you can find a good one," referring, of course, to fathers in general. Despite your painful experience of growing up without a "dad" you have managed to still believe that there are some good ones out there. That means you have faith in yourself, and, indeed, you proclaim that when you have kids you will be a good father/dad. You know that you do not want to follow your father's path. You are also wise in that you realize it is never too late to begin being the person you want to become. Practice does make perfect ... or "good enough" anyway. You are courageous to be able to share unpleasant (yes, criminal) stories of your father. You can use them to teach others how not to live, lest they end up like your father.*



## On My Mind

Hey Beat, this La Guera from San Francisco. I'm writin' 'bout something that's on my mind...

I'm tired of people categorizing gangbangers for what they stand for. People assume that all we do is fight over a color and die over a color, which is really not the case.

The reason why I say this is because I'm starting to see that more and more people say that bangin' is all over a color. I'm not tryin' to glorify bangin and I encourage people who don't bang to keep it that way, but as for the people who do, I'm pretty sure that they feel the same way I do, at least the real ones do. Some B'Gs or youngstas are getting into the game with a screwed up mentality. They think that bangin is about a color, a belt, a rag, certain shoes you wear, and all that shhh.

I can only speak for myself when I say this out: I don't have to wear the color or the belt or any of that shhh to show I'm down for my shhh. I can be dressed like a square or whatever and still be down for my shhh. I take pride in my family because its one of the things I got left and it's been there for a very long time.

I didn't say I wanted to gangbang because of the color. I'm down for the lifestyle, discipline, and the rules that you have to have. I'm not tryin' to tell people that bangin' is all good, but I feel like I should defend what I stand for.

Yeah, I'm a gangbanger, but I'm also smart, mature, respectable, responsible, a good leader, a good listener, attentive and far much more than that. And I know that without bangin', I wouldn't have those qualities. I'm much more than a banger, but bangin' is one of the things that best describes me. I love my mentality and I wouldn't change it.

I would write 'bout why I am the way I am but that's a long story.

**- Guera, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** Interesting perspective. That's a good point that when people only focus on colors and turf stuff, they miss the bigger picture of what attracts kids to gangs and gives them a sense of belonging. You write at the end that you might like to write about how you came to be the person you are today. We hope that you do write that story down and share it with us! Your pieces always give us a glimpse into the thoughtful young woman you are, and some of the tough stuff you have gone through. What about the downsides of gang banging? You say that you wouldn't necessarily recommend that someone who doesn't bang start doing it. Why?

## Be close to your child

Well, first of all I never any had any family when I was growing up, and I still don't have a family. But I have a daughter named "Nakeria." Her momma is Tete. I love them both. I would die for both of them if I had to. I know right now I'm not being a good father because I'm locked up. I swear I never wanted to come here but I messed up.

I'm only fourteen, but when I get out of here I know I got a lot of responsibilities. I know what I got to do with my life. Especially at this age, so I got a lot of stuff on my mind.

On the real though, the reason why I want to be close to my daughter is because I don't want her to grow up with out a father. So all those fathers out there you need to be there for your baby's momma and your child. But that's all until next time. I'm a hit you up in a minute. Peace.

**-Stephaun, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** You might not of had a family while you were growing up, but now the roles have switched and you have loved ones to take care of. You know what you have to do, but how are you going to do it? Wanting to be there for your daughter is very admirable. Do you what you have to do to be there for her, but make sure that you're staying out of trouble while you do it. Good luck and keep writing.

## This Risk

The risk I take day and night  
Like a kite in the wind  
Or the place in the rainbow  
When the colors start to blend  
Before I know the rules too  
They start to blend, before you know  
I'm like an eagle soaring with the wind  
I risk my life day and night  
to feed my family's mouths  
the stress upon my chest  
Equivalent to a 100lbs  
I duck the boy's bending the corner  
On a downward spiral on a path  
For more respect, money, and survival.

**-Young Stone, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** The imagery in your piece is really beautiful, but do you really want to risk your life for respect? Stay out of trouble, there are better ways to earn money for survival. Look where your previous actions have landed you, do you want to be in and out of here your whole life?

## To My Granny

My dad's mother is the love of my life,  
I think about her every day as I go to sleep at night.  
She taught me so much, everything I know,  
I hate to say it but it's gon' kill me when she go.  
I can tell her anything she's like my best friend,  
I will never forget the day she said I was her favorite kid.  
Now I'm stuck in jail and can't see her when I want to,  
This shhh ain't cool where I can't do what I want to do.  
Granny always told me to make wise decisions,  
Now that I think about it I should've been listening.

**-Young Teddy, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** You've just learned the most important lessons in life: The GAR rule (GAR = Grandma's Always Right). We hope that you continue to write to her until the day you can be with her in person... it will be good for you to see how strong you are becoming, even with the struggles you face. Peace!

## Grandma

I put you through a lot but you never gave up  
The times I cussed you out and you said you had enough  
The times I heard you cry and all I did was laugh  
But you was at the hospital for my son's first laugh  
By my side all night, tears rollin' down yo' eyes  
I 'member you sayin', "Family love never dies"  
I gave you a hug and thought I would change  
But it turned out my actions just stayed the same  
I kept hittin' you and all we did was argue  
But on my daddy, I never tried to hurt you  
I pray to god that there will be no other  
And since that day you become my father and my mother  
When I got kicked out you know how I feel  
When was at yo' house I never missed a meal  
Never went hungry and never went cold  
It's killin' me to know yo' hearts growin' old  
I'm sorry if I hurt you and made you cry  
But I just 'member yo' words  
"Family love never dies"  
I love you granny

**-Alley Mac, San Francisco**

**From the Beat:** We hope when you get back with your grandma that you remember how you felt when you wrote this. It's real easy to be "sorry" when you're locked up and lonely, and to fall back into your old ways once you're out. Your grandma is exactly right, "Family love never dies." Now it's time for you to express some of that family love by your actions as well as your words.

## RISK AND RESPONSIBILITY

Let me start by saying "Life is a risk" period. Well the biggest risk I have taken is when I had to do was when I had to tell my girlfriend's mom that she was pregnant by me. I did not only I had to talk to her dad, too.

I ain't going to lie, I was scared when she told me she was pregnant and even more when I had to talk to her parents. They were really mad and shocked at the same time. But they had to deal with it even though they did not really like me.

But then she had the baby and we had a blood test, 'cause her parents wanted her to, just to make sure. But the messed up thing was when we did, the baby was not mine and I got so mad and I left right there and then and did not talk to her for like a year.

Then in eighth grade, I started talking to her and her baby is beautiful, but she don't know who is the father.

**-Carlos, Fresno**

**From The Beat:** Carlos bringing a life into this world is easy but taking responsibility is not. It is such a big responsibility to be a parent at any age that we must really consider the risk involved in the possibility of an unplanned pregnancy. You were willing to risk talking to angry parents in order to show responsibility and we commend you for that.

## My Great Grandfather

My father left me before I was born, and I'll die before I do the same thing to my kids. If my girl were to tell me she was pregnant, I know I would be ready to take care of it regardless of my situation.

My great grandfather was my biggest role model in my life but he passed a few years ago, and things were never good for me. But ever since he passed, it seems like I never know what to do or who to go to when I have a problem.

I've made too much risks in my life just to pick one.

**-Jacob, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** We're sorry you lost your family role model. If you are true to the promise you make here to your unborn children, then you can be the new role model in your family. Time to start taking risks for your future, like going to school.

## Risks

In my 18 1/2 years, I have taken lots of risks. Since I was young, I would sneak out the kitchen window to go be with my homeboy because at night I wouldn't be able to leave or be outside. I would sneak out because there would be everybody from the projects, and play tag. We would run from street to street, but if you were it, it would be hard on you.

But back on the topic every time I would sneak out, and every time I came back from doing what I was doing I would take a whooping from my mama. That would be the risk for that.

I would think one of the biggest risks I took in my life is when I stopped playing sports and went all in to the game. I mean, when I was playing sports, I would just chill, smoke some weed and drink. But not since I went full in did realize things I didn't know. I started to rob people, houses, sell dope to get money and carry guns to protect me and the people around me.

And now that I get out, I gotta wait and see what happenning.

**-Wiggims, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** We're a little confused by that last sentence. Do you mean, now that you're out of the game you have to wait to see what happens, or when you get out of the hall? We hope, as you look back, you realize that you still have time to change course, and to start doing the things that gave you pleasure (like sports) without having to resort to crime or guns. It's time to risk returning to school and to a life that doesn't include lock-ups.

## Freedom

Freedom, what is freedom to us?

Why do we feel like we should have freedom when our actions put us in where we are today?

Here is the definition of freedom:

"The state of being free or at liberty rather than in confinement or under physical restraint.

The power to determine action without restraint."

I think, personally, those with minor incidents should have freedom, those who are innocent should have freedom, and those like me

should learn from our mistakes and do our time, use that time, and make a change so that our freedom will never have to be taken away for our wrong doings.

**-Kanisha, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** Great piece! Now that you have given us the dictionary definition of freedom, we would like to hear how you define freedom personally. When do you feel most free? When you regain your freedom, how will you celebrate it?

## My World

My name is Khalilah. I could have made better choices in life. I chose not to. I chose to run the streets, get pregnant at thirteen-years-old and have the baby. I made my life the way it is.

My whole life I've been blaming everyone but myself. Now I've had time to think and I've realized that I brought some of my problems on myself.

I told myself that April 9th of 2008 I would change --that was the day my son was born, but instead I went on and did what I was doing before.

I sometimes wish that I could go back in time and redo my life. Now all I have to do is pray and talk to God. He gave me another chance, but I can't keep taking Him for granted.

I just thank everyone that has helped me on the outs and since I've been in Juvenile Hall.

**-Khalilah, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** It's never too late to make positive changes in your life, especially when love is your motivation. You have your love for your son, and we hope you also feel love for yourself, and have love (and support) from people close to you. Whom do you rely on for strength? Who has got your back when you're feeling stressed?

## I didn't have a father

Well I didn't have a father in my life until I was a young teen. My dad wasn't there for me because he has been in jail for the past fourteen years. So when he got out I got to meet him. I was glad to know that I at least had a father. The reason I let him in my life was because I felt like everyone makes mistakes here and there like he did. Now I know how it is not to have a father in your life. Whenever I have kids of my own I am going to make sure they have their fathers' love.

As for my mother, she wasn't there as much also but she was there more than my dad. She was in and out of my life and lived in another city as she started another family. She tried her best to be in my life sometimes. Even though my parents made a lot of mistakes in my life I will always love them and when I have kids I will be a good parent to them. I got a lot of love from my grandma and grandpa because they took my parents places and gave me the love I needed.

**- Natalie, Fresno**

**From The Beat:** that is a very hard situation. We appreciate you sharing it. You had a hard time. We hope you are able to make the family you want.

## To Be Normal

When I was young I was always told to be myself, be unique. And as I grew older doing so became progressively more difficult.

With society the way it is, I began to realize that being different, more times than not, is frowned upon. Thus making me strive to be normal, to be accepted. In doing so I was led to do things that I normally wouldn't, associate myself with people I now despise, as well as aspire to be something that I knew would lead me down a path of destruction. But now I just chalk it up to life experience and lessons learned.

It is normal to be different. So to answer the question, what makes me different? Nothing. I'm just another confused person doing my best to do my best. What makes me special? My ability to approach every situation with a level head and make rational decisions. Or at least I'd like to hope so.

**-B Ant, Santa Clara**

**From The Beat:** Your writing is very reflective. 'It is normal to be different' is such an important point that you make. Why do you think that the prerequisite to being accepted by others is to not be oneself? Why do you think society looks down on 'being different'?

## My Own Father

My father was in my life when I was little growing up. But once my parents separated, I barely saw him again. While he had another daughter with another woman, soon later he and his wife started to have problems. He would turn his back on her too. Yeah he stayed in touch with his children but is he involved with them?

The only time I see him is when I go to my grandparents. Sometimes rarely I would see him there too.

My mom was strong enough to take care of me and my two sisters. I will always love my mom more than my dad. My mom wanted to be in our life. She loves me and my sisters more than anything in the world, and we feel the same way towards her.

**-Sopheara, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** What was it like growing up without your father being a steady figure in your life? You're lucky you had such a strong mother to support you and your siblings in this. How do you envision your family in the future?

## My Mom And Dad

Ok I got two things to respond to this. I know someone that lives up to being a good parent, that's my mother.

I know a parent that's a fool and don't live up to being a parent. That's my father. First I'm going to talk about how my mother and my brother are good to me. My mother takes care of me, my brother, my little brother and my big brother. She gives us mostly anything we want. She is loving, caring, sweet, kind hearted, funny and a responsible parent. That's why I love her until I die and she loves me.

One the other hand, let me tell you about this parent who's a fool and don't care of his children. That is my father. He divorced my mom when I was three years old. I don't know him like that, but one thing I know about him is he's always in and out of jail. He's a bad influence in my life. He's like a thug in my life. He's never there to take care of me. I wish he would though.

**-Eldzhan, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** You wish you had a better father figure in your life. Try and be that positive influence if you have kids in the future. Practice by being a good role model to your brothers. Act as responsibly as you can.

## Standing Tall

I live to die while I'm trying to live stepped one foot off the cradle now I'm closer to the grave and I stay thinkin' 'bout back in the days, not that different from the OG's even though a lot of things have changed, no more mano to mano no more loyalty and respect but I still take pride in the way I grew up to live, and I'm still not livin' with regret. I'm not ready to step, get up, and move on 'cause it's death before dishonor and I ain't down to fall, come jump on the ride let's get high and cruise, I'm always ready to win but I stay prepared to lose, 'cause this is my reality and this is the life that I choose, throwback the fitted hat, crease the dickies and hit the road, 'cause when I crack back those caps I'm always in the made, pay the toll, young G growin' up too quick before I open my eyes, realize I'm neck deep up in this shhh, I've done too much time already and it's makin' my head flip, but wait, hold on, hit your breaks listen up, when you going to realize this immaturity is enough, done too damn long mentally scratchin' my placaso on every wall, I smile now put my chin up and stand tall 'cause once again I ain't down to fall!

**-Smiley, Santa Clara**

**From The Beat:** When you don't feel that you have control over your life it can be very tough to get a grasp on things. But don't fall into that trap by giving others control of you. If you do what you want, not what others expect of you, and not what lets the system take you, you'll be better off.

## Apologies To My Grandfather And Mother

Dear Papa,

Raise praise, thankful for many days I'm asking God for forgiveness in so many different ways I let everybody down, especially you Should I rephrase your feeling: how dumb I must of have been

To forget growing up being black ain't easy

It's something you always taught

Now you sitting there at home crying and it's all my fault All this dueling and greediness is something upon me that I brought

I'm illegal in these streets, I'm sworn to never get caught I can't stop thinking about you, like I feel and got a knot All this guilty will not stop

Now I'm that lil' girl again crying with my nose full of snot

You raised me and I know it was hard for you to let me go away

Kept lying and saying I was gone come see you day after day

But I'm sorry an' I love you Papa

I'ma stop playing

I might be gone now

But I left my heart in your hand

**-Caprice, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** It sounds to us that if you really left your heart in your Papa's hands, then it is safe there, because all he wants is the best for you. Unfortunately, you have to tend to your own hurt heart, and by doing that, you'll give your Papa the respect and love he truly deserves.



## Be Better Than Your Father

Well, I'm going to talk about my father. Let me see. My father was there for me my whole life until now. I'm 15 and stuck in this "shhh" hole.

I'm the man in the house. Everyone relies on me. Whenever something goes wrong, they look for me to help.

So now that I'm in here, I found out at court that my dad raped my mom and abused her. I didn't really take it in a good way. I felt like I was blamed for it, and still think that it's my fault. My dad is locked up for eight years.

I have a nephew who I take care of. He's like my kid.

I had a kid - well, was gonna have one, but my ex-baby's momma killed it. It hurt me really bad, like a piece of my heart broke. So just "man up" if you have kids. Don't run away from something you've brought into this world because it's really a bad thing to lose a father or to not have a father. So be a father that you've had or be better than your father was!

**-Maxx, Fresno**

**From The Beat:** What an awfully big responsibility for a 15-year-old teenager (referring to the first part of your writing). How could your father have "been there for you" but yet you were expected to be "the man in the house" that "everyone relies on" and the one they look to for help "whenever something goes wrong"? That sounds like a description of a father or the "man of the house," or better yet, a description of what a responsible adult person should be like or should be doing for the family. Let us make one thing very clear to you: You were not at all responsible for or in no way should you have been blamed for what your father did to your mom. We hope during your time at the hall that you seek out and learn anger management skills and techniques. We hope when you get out of here that you are ready to begin your new life so that you will never be incarcerated again. We hope you will learn from your mistakes and the mistakes of others.

*I just hope guys start realizing that they're not only hurting the mother of the child, but they are also hurting the child itself.*

## It's Hard On These Oakland Streets

It's hard on these Oakland streets, you know why?  
'Cause I'm writing in The Beat.

You know why 'cause I'm sitting in these seats.  
The life of crime rings around Oakland and sometimes I need money,

but I don't just do what I do for nothing.

It's a struggle for some youngstas around Oakland.  
Hopefully when I get older I can get me a job and get my life better than it has been.

I've had a rough life, but that's not an excuse to keep messing up

because it's plenty of people that went through what I been through  
that has made it out of poverty and made something out of themselves.

When I get out I'm gon' hold myself more accountable for my actions.

That's all I gotta say 'till next week.

To all keep yo' heads up and knock yo' time out peace.

**-Damani, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** You make a great point that many people have worked to achieve success after a hard life. We're happy you believe that it's possible. You say you hope to better your life in the future, but you can start doing that right now. You have the right idea saying that when you get out, you're going to hold yourself accountable for your actions. You're almost an adult, after all. Work to get a job, and stay on track. You're off to a good start by just realizing this.

## A Fool Or A Father!

I believe a true father is that one responsible baby daddy that is willing to take charge as a father by being there for his baby boy or girl. I mean, my father has always been there for me even though I'm adopted and everything.

I'm currently pregnant at the time, and I know for a fact that my baby daddy is going to step up and take charge as a daddy, and that's real. A fool to me is a dude that gets a girl pregnant and don't got the time in the day to take care of his own. I mean, dang, how can a man have the time to have sex without a condom, but don't have the time to take care of his responsibilities.

Every man in my family that has a baby takes care of his. They may not be with the baby momma still, but they still be there twenty-four-seven. I just hope guys start realizing that they're not only hurting the mother of the child, but they are also hurting the child itself. Nobody should have to go through life without a daddy, and no woman should ever have to go through life without a baby daddy.

**-Baby D, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** We certainly agree with you that a boy who gets his girl pregnant and then walks away from his responsibilities is a fool. (This is because they only had "fools" for male role models.) But we also wonder about the girls who allow this to happen to them. After all, there are many ways to protect yourself both from pregnancy and from STDs, and it's an act of irresponsibility not to take these precautions (on both sides). You are very lucky to have a father in your life (whether you're adopted or not), so, we hope you are right about your baby's daddy, and that you are both responsible parents, but only time will prove your words true or not.

## Dear Momma

Now Momma, you're a different story

We both did wrong, but I'm sorry

It's mostly my fault, I take the blame of majority

I understand you wanna go out with your friends and party

I did too

When I think about us, I look up and the sky is no longer blue

One day I seen a star and instantly named it after you

I should've stayed by your side and stayed strong

If I did, I wouldn't neva been in here writing this song

It's like I'm the only person in the world, you left all alone

But I'm sorry I tried to kill to birds with one stone

I'm here by your side

Not your heart, not your daughter, but your pride

I miss you mom; now I just cried and cried

I'd rather take a bullet to my soul in my chest before I let you die

I love you momma and that's on the inside

**-Caprice**

**From The Beat:** It's hard to be locked up at the best of times/ But it's worth your effort, as you make clear in these rhymes/ Your words of love will comfort your mother/ But words alone are not enough, there's something other/ There's one more thing that's needed from you/ And that's to put actions behind these words and make them true!

## Everyday

Not one single day passes

That I don't worry about

my future

My time seems slow

But my life is only for so

long

Everyday is another day

gone

Never going to get it back

Not only days gone for me

But my family too

Everyday my family cared

Everyday they were there

for me

Everyday all they did was

put out love

Everyday they always

tried for my best

Now I'm taken away

Separated from the ones

who care

But when I'm finally out

I promise to you, all my

loved ones

Everyday is yours!

**-Sunshine Dylan, Alameda**

**From The Beat:** The things your loved ones most want, of course is to see you happy, and to see you fulfill all the promise they see in you. In other words, promise yourself that when you get out, every day will belong to the best in you!

## The Jewel of My Family

My grandma is the most important person in my life. She took me in when I was two months old and my mother left me in Oakland with some dope fiend friends and did not come back.

My father did not really stick around when I was growing up...well I still am but for the most vital part of my life, he was in and out you know? When he needed to sober up he was at the house, but when he regained his health he went back to the same thing. My grandma has been there since day zero.

Anyways much thanks to her. That is the jewel of my family and I love her to death.

**-Big Hungry**

**From The Beat:** That is really sweet; she sounds like a pretty amazing person. It's important to have someone in your life that is there for you always, though not everyone has that, and you are lucky that you do. Does she come to visit you? Do you write to her?

## I Wish I Was Free

I wish I was free

Ain't no heaven for Lil' Te

That's why I'm staying strong being the best I can be  
They say get ready for the pen but the pen ain't ready for me

When I go to sleep at night it's the jets that I see

Waking up in the morning same shhh I see

Commit a lil' crime then you gotta pay the fee

Rest in peace Da'von and my ninja Lil' D

See ya'll when I get there just watch over me

Until we meet again -- we all we got.

**-Lil' Purp**

**From The Beat:** There's two kinds of freedom, mental and physical. While you are locked up you have no control over your physical freedom, but are you fighting to keep your mind free? How will you do that? Because mental freedom is a lot harder to hold on to - and a lot more valuable.

## I Fought the Law (And the Law Won)

The biggest risk I took was when I busted at the law.

It was a risk because I had to shoot my way out of it. And knowing the law got aim I could of lost my life. The reason I did it because I didn't want to go to jail.

They came after me because someone told had told them I was carrying a gun around the neighborhood. So for me to get away I had to bust my way out of it.

**-Antwoin**

**From The Beat:** We feel relief for you, but the thing is you didn't get away, you got locked up - if not for that moment, then for the life you were leading. We hope you never take that risk again, the system doesn't play. Real freedom isn't something you can bust your way into!

## Back in the Hall

What's up Beat? This is Young Capy once again writing from camp. Well I heard my homie is back in the hall, well hopefully they show him some love and send him back to ROP and not to the "Y". He is like my little brother, we use to do hella stuff together in Oakland. We basically grew up together. I haven't seen him in over a year because we both been in and out of jail for a coo' minute, but I hope we get out soon and be back kickin' it like the old days, just keepin' it solid.

Well much love and respect.

**-Lil' Capy**

**From The Beat:** That's cool that you guys have been able to stay friends for so long, especially since you haven't seen each other in so long. What do you think it will be like to see each other again? Maybe the two of you could help each other stay out of the hall, once you both get out.

## No Different

It's not gonna be different when I touch down as an adult, because I'm gonna be doing the same stuff, I'm just gonna be older.

I'll just probably go to Santa Rita and face more time. What I heard about Rita is that it's better then the hall 'cause you can buy food. Well, I think adult time will be the same as the hall but longer.

**-Lil Capy**

**From The Beat:** How come you are so sure that you will be going to Santa Rita and doing more time? Do you not want to make a different life for yourself? Don't you want to give yourself a chance to change, a chance to stay out of prison? Is there something you want be when you grow up? Some career you want to have?

## Fatherhood Stress

I plan on being a father to my children but at the same time its hard because when you got a baby mama like mine its nothing but "oh no's- all stress, depression, and big time madness. She kind of pushes me toward being the fool instead of a father because some of the thing she says and most of the things she does. I really try my hardest to be cool with her but the girl is really evil.

Her whole demeanor can change in the matter of seconds, and sometimes I feel like saying some things that I know I will regret, so I don't bother. Besides it isn't my son's fault so I can't take my anger towards her out on him. That's kind of good I have two baby mamas because when one acts up I have the other to go for comforting.

I got 2 years in YA so I try my hardest to keep it in to myself and not let then and the other unnecessary outside drama get to me. I got too much other stuff going on in my mind to let other little things get to my head so I told my baby mama I'm cool off her so I just gave her space so I can do my time, or, well, try to do my time without stress and madness.

**-Doug E. Fresh**

**From The Beat:** This is the biggest lesson a parent can learn: The fact that child should never pay for parents' drama. Some parents spend their whole lives in the same house with their children and never learn that lesson. But you figured it out, on your own, when you're still a child in other peoples' eyes. This just shows how much natural strength you have inside you - and how ahead of the game you already are, despite your negative circumstances.

## My Father is Responsible!

My name is Tony and I believe my father has met or overdone he responsibilities of being a father. He has always made sure his kids and wife were taking care of.

He always put his family first, he works harder then any other guys I know to provide for his family! So my intentions when I am one, really I want to be as committed like my father!

**-Tony**

**From The Beat:** It's good to see that you have learned how to be a father from this person. Did he also give you lessons on what it takes to be a man? What did you learn from him?

## The 'Hood is Crazy

I take risks everyday out here on the block. The hood is crazy. Just stop and think about what you about to do- it's a risk, you can be dead if you take this risk, you can be in jail for 25 years to life- I am just telling you think before you take that risk.

**-Lil Marcys**

**From The Beat:** That is a really good point, do you think that if everybody stopped and went over what they were about to do before they did it, we would see a major decrease in the number of people getting arrested?

## Risk

The biggest risk I ever took was what I did to get here. I know what I did wasn't the right thing, and at the same time I wish I could rewind time and stop myself in making this mistake. It was around 1 or 2 o'clock and we seen some body, and that's when it happened. "We robbed a guy".

At first I was thinking about what other kids would think when they do something stupid. "Yeah lets do it!". Now I realize my actions were wrong and I wouldn't want anybody to rob any of my family members. Shhh, now I just want to go home.

**-Mad**

**From The Beat:** We're glad that you reflected on it and accepted that what you did was wrong. You've seen the consequences of one mistake, how are you going to avoid these mistakes in the future?

## I'm Gone Do Good!

When I get out I'm 'bout to do good and go to school because it's getting hectic and I'm bout to get a job so I can support myself and go to college. Then I'm planning to be a billionaire and have hella houses and restaurants and hella shhh. When I get home I'm gone get some and I'm gone eat my favorite food

**-Dave**

**From The Beat:** That's quite an ambitious dream. Take it one step at a time, starting with staying out and getting a job. How do you plan on achieving that goal? What sort of job are you planning on getting? Let's hear more.

## Why I risk it

The reason I risk my life is because I've always wanted to be like Scarface. I risked my life with the gun in my waist because I sell Oxy cotton. Now oxy cotton is a new drug on the market. People are crazy for it and try to rob you. So you have to defend your self. I'm in for selling oxy cotton pills. I risk it for the American dream.

**-Casper**

**From The Beat:** Is this really worth risking your life? There are ways of achieving the "American dream". If you work towards success in a clean way, you won't be living a life where you're always looking over your shoulder. This may be the easy way to make money, but it comes with a lot of consequences. Are you willing to get killed or go to jail for this?

## Another day

Another day in here, another day lost  
Another day the staff cry and say they the boss  
Another day wearing some one else's clothes  
Another day I didn't do much  
Another day with out a female's touch  
Another day with the same lunch  
Another day with the same nasty food  
Another day with a bad mood  
Another day with out family  
Another day wondering when I'll be happy  
Another day gone  
Another day I don't know what's going on  
Another day I wish I was smoking with the homies out  
the bong  
Another day I go to sleep  
Another day I wake up and say another day?

**-Baby Joker**

**From The Beat:** There's a lot of things that you're not going to be able to experience while you're in juvi. However, constantly thinking about them isn't going to make you feel better. In fact, it will just make you dwell on your problems. Instead, think of the things you can do while you're locked up. Use this time to continue writing, thinking, and reflecting on your life. What are you going to do when you get out? What are your plans for the future?

## A Foul

What's up my people  
I'm a fool for being around people that don't get money  
that they earn  
Can't be foolish with cats  
You can't do that  
I don't need to hang out with those so-called thugs that  
break the law  
I got to get my mind right on the right path  
That's where I belong and this is where I don't belong  
In jail feeling like a animal in the cage  
Can't go no where  
I can run, and I can't hide  
Back to the hood where they say I don't belong  
But still to be found  
So why run?  
If you do the crime do the time  
I'm just another fool stuck in hell with flames and dust  
Time to make a change to make it to heaven  
I was a fool this summer fooling around  
It's time to take charge of not being a fool  
Time is money  
I need to earn it

**-Lil' Johnny**

**From The Beat:** You're right, you don't need this life, you don't need to surround yourself with these people. You're still young, you still have time to rebuild your life, and it's clear that you want to. You have the right idea.

## Father or Fool

Well being in the hall puts me in the category of the fool instead of a father. I say that because when my son come into this world I'm not gon' be there for him for the first couple of months. But when I get out and pimp this group home, best believe that I'm gon' be there for my lil' ninja. That's all I think about while I'm locked up in this place. But it's good, my release day gon' come.

**-Nasty boy Rick**

**From The Beat:** Try and be motivated by your desire to make a better life for your son. When you get out, you'll get the chance to do that. Start thinking now about how you're gonna do this. Make a plan, and work towards it. The most important thing you can do for your son once you're out is to stay out and physically be there to raise him.

## Jail is lonely

Man, jail is lonely 'cause when you doing bad you in your room you think about your family and your girlfriend. Then you just get mad 'cause you're in here and you want to get out and see your family. But when your doing good and think you're getting out, the judge detaines you and you got to go back to your room. Then you wish you was with your family and friends.

Then you look at your pictures and it looks like there having a good time on the outside, and then you wish you was with them. When you work in jail you be having a good time with the people you work with. Then you go to your room and think about how you wish you were with your friends drinking and smoking having hella fun with them.

Then you go to sleep and have a dream about yo' ninjas. Then you wake up mad because you wake up behind these four walls and you're in jail. I wish I was with my girl friend. I say this because I have my own experience, and it's not fun in jail. Believe me.

**-Lil' J-Tuda**

**From The Beat:** You know what you're missing out on at home, but continuing to think about it won't make you feel any better. Use this negative feeling as motivation to not come back.



## My Grandmother

My family Jewel is my grandmother who inspires me a whole lot. She is the backbone of my family and motivates us to go the right path. My grandmother tells me a lot of stories about her life growing up as a child and some of them are very hard things for any other person to get through.

She is a very strong lady. I always look at that as a bright thing. For someone to accomplish through the hard journey of life and bounce back and make it into something positive is a great achievement.

**-Grandson**

**From The Beat:** We're glad you have someone to inspire you this way. Your grandmother sounds like a great woman. Make sure you work to impress her in the future. You can be this inspiration in other people's lives too some day. You can bounce back from a hard journey of life and make it into something positive. You're right, that is a great achievement, and we believe you can do it.

## My Plan

Today I'm gonna write a lil' bit about my goals and what I want to be in life! I am going to start by fishing high school and getting my diploma. Then I'm gonna go to Spellman or ATL, to black colleges. Then I'm going to go to a five year doctor school to get my medical license to become a pediatrician and a surgical pediatrician.

**-Cheyenne**

**From The Beat:** If you are serious about these goals, then you have lots of work to do. We're not going to sugar coat it... if you want to go to a competitive college like Spellman, then you need to start hitting the books ASAP! A dream is different than a wish because a dream is something you're willing to work hard to achieve.

## Disowned

Have you ever been disowned walking home  
With just a back pack now so you got to hold your own  
On the streets trying to make a livin'

Haters tryin' to bring you down but you got to stay  
strong

'Cause on the real I be bangin' to the bone

My ninja got shot

Why ninjas got to be so wrong

They say leave me alone

But my ninjas don't get down like that

So we going to follow them home.

**-Lil' Charlie**

**From The Beat:** Trying to get revenge on those that have hurt you won't make the situation any better. Though it might feel right to make them experience the hurt you've felt, making the problem even bigger comes with many more consequences. You might feel like you have to protect your friend's pride, but there are better ways of doing that than taking others pride. You can do better than building up the conflict.

## RIP Crazy

What's up Beat? Just wanting to let you know about my homey Crazy. He was shot in the head by a rival gang. This homie just graduated high school. He was a good kid. He was cool with most people he knew. He was gang related but most people looked at him like he wasn't gang related.

His mom is sad, his homies are sad and his close friends are sad. Now the only time I can see him is at his grave and on my T-shirt.

That's a sad feeling when four of my homies are gone in the past two years. Well Beat, that's all I got for you.

**-Anthony**

**From The Beat:** Anthony, we're sorry for your loss. Try to not let the same happen to you. Tell us more about who your friend was to you. How does it feel to have so many of your friends gone?

## How much I need

Was good, this is Adrian. Once I get out the hall I'm bout to go smoke some dro. Then I'm going to try to do good so I don't come back to the hall.

**-Adrian**

**From The Beat:** Try and expand more on how you're going to try and do good. Smoking is not a good start.

## A Fool Named Donnie

I was raised with out a father. I got one but I was never with him. I never called him daddy. I always called him Donnie by his name. Every time I called him by that he would slap the shhh out of me. So I try my best to stay out of his way and most of the time I did but when he would come home drunk or high he would beat me and my mom for fun.

One day he got a rude awakening. I was playing with a box cutter and I didn't know how to open it, but when he made me mad, he slapped me and I started laughing at me. I opened up the box cutter and I stabbed him in the leg.

I never cried when he hit me, 'cause it didn't hurt no more, even when I got my eye busted I just let the blood flow down.

I been through a lot. I'm a b.g. That's what my Uncle always said. RIP Uncle T.

**-Baby Joker**

**From The Beat:** The way your father was treating you was not the way a father should treat his son, or a way a human should treat another human at that. You see that these experiences were negative ones but how can you learn from them in a positive way? In the future you may have children of your own, keep your father in mind when you're deciding who you don't want to be. Write about your situation with your father, reflecting on these events could help you.

## My Life

My hair is rows long  
it grows and grows  
webbed with all the knowledge I know  
the memory we got  
the experiences we shared  
I row knee deep with my hands in the air  
my big brothers be rollin'  
we know that knowledge from them streets  
we be livin' that money with the hard life is addin  
I got two faces  
you'll never see both  
I'll be sweet and smart  
but I can rock that boat

**-Camille**

**From The Beat:** We hope that you can find ways to use your knowledge and strength to "rock the boat" in a positive way.

## Next Step

What's up with The Beat. I be hella mad 'cause I still don't know when I'm goin' to get out. I go to court tomorrow, I hope everything goes coo' so I can be out with my family and kicking it with my homies.

When I get out I'm going back to school and try to get a job, feel me, I ain't trying come back to this boring ass hall. All right then Beat I'm out.

**-B. Slips**

**From The Beat:** You seemed so calm the day you wrote this - it's like no matter what you are going through in your life, you always maintain a calm exterior. But meanwhile it's storms and strong emotions underneath. Is your whole family like that?

## I Can't Believe It

I cannot believe I'm up in here. This is now the seventh time my mama called the cops on me, and they finally took me in. I got booked at like five o'clock in the morning and only got two hours of sleep. They transferred me twice today.

Tomorrow, I got court and my probation officer told me that I will probably be released and put on home supervision. I'm tired and irritated. I miss my cell phone. The hall is not it...hearing the big metal doors makes me feel weak.

**-Hope**

**From The Beat:** We hope that you and your mom can sit down for some real talk about your relationship. You have to find a way to co-exist respectfully at home.

## The family jewel

My loving grandmother  
Whom I love with all my heart  
Make me think to new heights  
From above the heart  
The love she shows unconditional  
You can't find no where else  
Since I was a little boy, small  
As Santa Claus elves  
She's there rain or snow  
Thick or thin, shine or smog  
Though my whole life I never said "I love you"

**-Young Stone**

**From The Beat:** This is a really a nice poem, we can see you a lot about your loved ones. How can you be there for people the way your grandmother has been there for you?

## Love and Hate

To me love and hate are the two most strongest feelings  
that you could feel for somebody.  
So is it possible to feel them both for one person?  
Or is one of my feelings unreal?  
Is it that my love will not actually allow me to hate you?  
Or is it my love that does allow me to hate you.  
Two years and only this one time you've betrayed me.  
So I forgive you and I want you to know that.  
But if you love me like you say, then I know you will go  
and do the right thing.  
I miss you and I love you.

**-Caras**

**From The Beat:** Only time will tell, right? You have an open heart and you aren't afraid to ask the big questions about love. Forgiveness is not weakness. It will be ultimately up to you to decide if this person lives up to the second chance you gave.

## Factors

Everybody is always talking about factors. Everybody wannabe a factor 'cause they think you get respect. You might get respect but them same ninjas who suppose to be respecting you will snitch on yo' ass.

If you think about it almost all the factors go to jail forever or get killed. It shouldn't matter to you to have everybody knowing what you doing as long as you know what's going on. To all you out there be under wit' yo' shhh.

**-Dirty D**

**From The Beat:** Yes, bragging about being a factor can be dangerous, but being a factor is dangerous in itself. If you're not even part of the situation then you don't have anything to worry about. Instead of thinking about how to not get caught, think about how you can avoid this situation entirely.

## Was On A Deathwish

I was taking a risk by smoking weed and selling fake dope. I was blowing eighths almost every day and selling zips for \$100. I wouldn't care to who I was selling to because if they were to rob me I would fight them back.

But fighting would scare me and it also was a risk, because if I was on the wrong block I could get killed. I need to be aware of what I'm doing because I could be more at risk. I'm at risk right now and I don't want to be in here.

**-Ryan**

**From The Beat:** Clearly that hasn't been a positive decision to make in your life. The things you just mentioned sound very frightening. Do you regret your decision to start selling? After seeing where it's gotten you, what are you going to do when you get out?

## Hella Mad

I'm sittin' in here hella mad right now. I'm waitin' to go to ROP. They takin' hella long to come get me. I've been waitin' almost two months for them to come and get me.

Once they get ready to come get me I'm go refuse it and make them hella mad. But if I do go I'm go start hella shhh and be an a-hole.

**-Lil' Rob**

**From The Beat:** Remember that you're being judged on your actions. If you want to get out as soon as you can, deciding to be difficult is counter-productive. Be responsible, act respectful and you'll benefit.

## Plans When I Get Out

Well, first of all, I'm proud of myself cause I did graduate from Dewey this June. Just was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

When I get out of this institution, I have a lot of plans I will accomplish. First, I will go home to my lil' celebration, a lil welcome back get together. Eat all the delicious food my mom cook. Get a lil buzz.

Then the next day I plan on going to Alameda College to get enrolled and filling out my financial aid forms.

I'm a be going to school for nursing. I hope it takes me only two years.

Then I will go job hunting. But when I get home, I will get my hair done. I'm juiced, I already bought my hair before I went to jail. Then, after I'm home from Alameda College, I will go to the mall and go by me a couple fits with the lil' dough I do got.

**-Christine**

**From The Beat:** This is a great plan, minus the buzz/partyin', and you have all the energy and optimism of a new high school grad. Congratulations on graduating, and best of luck with your plans. Hopefully, you can avoid situations like the one that tripped you up and landed you in the hall. You might want to give some serious thought to that.

## A Young Teen

A young teen lookin' for love  
Couldn't get it at home, now she turn to the streets  
Got into drugs, now she a crook

A young teen she seen stealing and selling as a way of  
life of a kid trying to survive

A young teen, just a kid herself, about to give birth  
A young teen now got adult responsibility, turning to the  
street trying to make ends meet The pain and heartache:  
somebody stop it, can't take it any longer

My life slowly slipping away

**-Princess Tae**

**From The Beat:** Our hearts go out to you during what must feel like a very overwhelming time. Your child's birth will be a new start in your life, not the end.

## My Big Risk

The biggest risk I took was when I violated probation because I knew I was gone end up back in jail one way or another. I kind of regret it but at the same time I don't regret 'cause I was free. I'm gone.

**-Thoughts**

**From The Beat:** Don't believe that you're always going to end up back in jail. There's always time for change, remember you have the power to make good decisions, and steer your life in the direction that you want it to go.

## Don't Come To Jail!

I came to jail and my grandmother died. I was unable to go to see her and I was mad for not being able to see her for my very last time in my life. So don't come to jail.

**-Jp**

**From The Beat:** We're sorry that you didn't get to see your grandmother when she died. It can be rough being away from people you care about. Use this as motivation to stay out of trouble, so you can stick with your loved ones.

## Stopped Smoking

When I smoke weed out of a footer I was trippin'. Don't ever smoke weed if you don't know how. So you know what? I stopped smoking weed because of my mom and my cousin.

**-Joker**

**From The Beat:** It seems like you are really influenced by your family. How did your mom and your cousin convince you to stop? We want to hear more.

## The Family Jewel

My grandmother means the world to me. She has been there for me since I was one-and-a-half. She has taught me right from wrong. My grandmother is the boss in the house. Whatever she says, goes!

When my grandmother passes on to the next life, I know I'm going to miss her with all of my heart. I love my grandmother to death. I don't know what I would do without her. Sometimes me and her fight argue, but in the end I regret fighting with her.

**-Raselly**

**From The Beat:** We hope your grandmother will get to read your lovely tribute. Since you have reflected on the fact that you don't like the way it feels after you fight with her, what do you think you can do differently in the future to avoid these fights? Is she telling you "no" because she doesn't want you to get hurt or get in trouble?

## Thinking

Why live?

I'm in here locked up!

Close behind this thick doors.

I can't wait to get released back to the main world.

So tell me why you like living in the hall.

I will live and I will be a whole new man.

I want to change myself to only do things the right way.

I don't want to rob, steal, threat, nor fight.

I will get a job and get paid.

I will live...

So I could get back home to be all happy again.

**-Choko**

**From the Beat:** You seem to have great aspirations for your future. We're happy that you have the motivation to change, and that you know what you have to do. Next, you need a plan. What kind of job do you want? How are you going to make this desire a reality? On another note, we really want to keep reading your writing, so continue.

## A Father

I got a daughter that just turned two years old on July 7, even though I missed her birthday. But anyways, I'm a father 'cause I take care of my child. I don't disclaim mine... I don't get down like that.

I mean if I feel like the child is not mine, I'm not gonna instantly disclaim it, I'm gonna want to find out if it's mine. 'Cause if it could be mine. But I try to do the best I can by her... Soon things will be how I want it to be... I mean it is true: Any fool can make a baby but it take a real man to take care of one. Or, if you are a real gangsta, real gangstas take care of they kids to.

I mean I feel if you know you having a sex without a condom and you know and you got the girl pregnant and still deny it's yo' child something is wrong with you. I mean if you know the girl you messing with is messing around with other dudes, and she come to you and says I'm pregnant with yo' baby then that's when you deny and say its not yours.

But I love my daughter more then anything and I cant wait to get out and see her.

**-E**

**From The Beat:** The thing is that now there are paternity tests so a man can always find out whether or not he is the father. Most important, as you say, is taking responsibility. Now that you are a father, has have you changed your ideas on what you want to live your life? What is your daughter's name? Who is she living with right now?

## My Life!

What is my life?

It sure ain't sittin' locked up in the hall...so what is my life?

Shhh, I know, I do...

How about you!?

My life includes someone special...someone that's become a part of me.

Damn, why do she make me feel so weak?

I need her in my life. She makes me feel whole

'cause without her, ma life ain't whole!!

You a part of my soul.

You know who you are.

You come first, baby gurl...

**-T-Baby**

**From The Beat:** We are so happy for you that you have found true love. What changes will this bring for you?

## Stunt In Heaven

Both were solid

Both were hitters

Going hard to the max

Never could be quitters

Stayed loyal to they soil

And one things for sure

When it came to being real

They were a 100% pure

From two different blocks

And two different sexes

But will approach problem similar

When thing get hectic

Both of them gone and I'm still stuck I'm the daze

Stunt in heaven to my sis' Mellia and my real ninja Dave

Stunt in heaven Tamellia Cobbs and David Foster.

**-Young Money**

**From The Beat:** It's hard to think of these two young people, cut down when they had full futures ahead of them. You survived, they didn't. Does this make you feel lucky, or even more important, does it make you feel like you might have a purpose to serve on this planet... a mission?



## Holdin' It Down

Yo' what's popping with The Beat??? Yep, I'm gonna call this "Holding it Down"' 'cause before I went down, I was holding it down.

For all y'all that don't know what holding it down means that's too bad or you gonna have to read this. Me, myself and I is all I got.. so I was holding it by myself on my block, ya dig.

**-The Miker**

**From The Beat:** It's a good title, because it can mean so many things. It can mean doing what you were doing out on the block - which was a problem because you lost your freedom, or it can mean doing everything you can to take care of your family and yourself. If you want to really hold it down, for yourself and for your freedom, isn't it time to think about going legit?

## So Far...

So far life's been cool to me. No doubt I got options, either change or ride this stuff out.

Can't blame nobody else for the things I do. The voice in my head is like "ninja, is all on you" gotta think about my family, they need me to. Might as well switch it up and try something new.

**-Jesus**

**From The Beat:** You're right - you do have the option to change. There's absolutely no reason why you can't make the changes you need. Like you said, it's just about switching things up, trying to work out some changes in your lifestyle.

## One more chance

When you leave this earth and you know you did wrong,  
as you sit in front of God

Asking, "What's going on?" "What am I here for?"

As God tells you what you here for, you ask for one more chance.

But then you think about it, as you sit there,  
knowing you busted a ninja's head, rob ninjas, even mob  
on ninjas.

Sold yo' life to the devil, but in the hood you don't care.  
But when you stand in front of God, if it Him, then it's hell.

- God give me a chance!

**-Jerald**

**From The Beat:** You write about your fear of the ultimate judgment of the life you've been living. If you feel already that your choices will lead to a negative outcome in the end, you know it's time to make different choices. You've given yourself the advice you need, all you have to do is listen to it.

## I Am A Father!!

Some people might think of me as a fool. I truly believe that I am a Father. I call myself a father 'cause I took care of my son on the outs.

I sold drugs even though it wasn't right. But I didn't have no other options. I was on the run and that's all I know.

I took very good care of family. My son ain't wanting nothing. Even though I'm not there I still care.

I know being there is what counts, but life's about making changes. I got money put up for him, my wife don't have to worry.

**-Lil' Tone**

**From The Beat:** Though we can see that you really care about your son, and have a strong desire to be there for him, maybe you should think of other ways to get the money necessary to provide for your family. Selling drugs will land you in jail time and time again, always taking you away from your son. When you get out, try to find a job, and set a positive example for your son, so he doesn't end up selling drugs or in the halls. That is the most important thing you can give him - a good example.

## RIP My Sister Tanika

Man... The worst day of my life was when my favorite sister got killed. I was devastated. RIP Tanika. I had just talked to her before she went out and lost her life. If I could give up my last breath just to hear her precious voice, I would. I'm missing you sis, and I'm always thinking of you.

**-Clay-dizzle**

**From The Beat:** We are so sorry for your loss, not just of your sister but all the loss and pain you've written about for The Beat - and all we can say is that it's an honor to see how you still keep your spirit up. You have survived, and you are a survivor, don't give up, either on yourself or on your future.

## Shouts Out To The Beat!

What's up Beat? Nice having you at Juvenile Hall talking and listening what the kids here got to say I think it's wonderful that y'all have this program going on. Write back later.

**-Lil' Hyfee**

**From The Beat:** We're glad that you're participating in the program. We look forward to reading your work.

## I Want To Tell My Mom That I Love Her So Much

When I get out I am going to do better. I want to tell her that I am sorry for the stuff that I do in this streets, an' I won't do that stuff again. I want to tell my brother that I love him so much an' I should be out telling him to do good at home.

**-Dev**

**From The Beat:** Set a good example for your brother when you get out, and stay out of trouble. You seem to know that you need to be a good role model for him. Prove to yourself and your family that you can do it.

## Back to this Hellhole

Man I'm tired of these halls man always leaving, then coming back. The longest I've ever made it was four months, then back to this hell hole ... and now they don't turn off the lights cause it's policy.

**-Rope**

**From The Beat:** Once you get caught up it's hard to get out. But there are people who do it, especially if they reach out to positive people they respect and ask for help and support. Do you have that? Either in your family or even through a program? Because it sounds like you're truly ready for a different life....a happier one.

## The Block / In The Cell

When I was out I hugged the block, sold rocks, ran  
from cops

And hang with ninjas that popped.

I did a lot of things carried things just cause I knew I  
could get away with it

So if I was get caught I'll admit I did it

Now I'm sitting here in jail for the crimes I've committed.

My moms always told me to stay out the streets

But I never listened and still stayed on my feet

I hustled to eat and did what I had to survive

When you on your own you gotta do whatever to stay  
alive.

All my life I was told that if I ran the streets

I was either goin' to be in jail or I was gin' to die

But in my heart I knew I would stay alive.

**-J. Baby**

**From The Beat:** You show real rhyming talent here, it's like you don't settle for the same old flows, instead you invent new ones, new ways to twist up the words. We hope this is the first of many!

## So Hood

What's up Beat, this yo' boy Little Man from Oakland. It's some fake ass ninjas in Oakland. But some of my ninjas fake too and scared too, but my ninjas are so hood, bet me I'm so hood bra.. But I'm a good person if you know me man, but people say I'm too bad- but I'm this to Hood and I love my ninja and my brothers

**-Lil' Man**

**From The Beat:** You are full of love for the people you're close to. Why do you think there are people out there who say you're "too bad?" Is it because of things you've done, people you are with?

## Regular Citizen

Man I got three more months to go, it's time to move on wit' my life and do the right thing, live a good freedom life as a regular citizen. And ain't got to be paranoid and look out wherever you go. So that's what I want, and what we all want: to live a good freedom life and have a big family.

**-Nguyen**

**From The Beat:** This is a really positive piece. We hear you say that you want to be safe, and that you want to make some changes so one day you can raise a family. Work through those three months, and prove that you can make those changes.

## Waitin' For ROP

What's good Beat. This is Lil Six right here. I'm just sayin' what's up. I'm still here, waitin' for ROP to come pick me up.

I've been here for five months and I'm getting sick of this place, but to all just be cool and stay out of these walls.

**-Lil' Six**

**From The Beat:** We hope things go well for you at ROP. Do your program and keep in touch!

## Risk

I think I put myself at risk all the time when I make the same mistakes. The same mistakes is always a negative outcome, but if you grow from your mistakes and know that the same mistake is a negative outcome try something new.

Changing is a risk for me ....sometimes I'm afraid of change.

**-Jasmine**

**From the Beat:** It's natural to be afraid of change... we all like to hold on to the things and people that are familiar, even if they hurt us. What are some of the things you are most worried about changing?

## My Best Dream/My Worst Nightmare

My best dream. My best dream was graduating college, with my mom and my dad healthy and happy.

My worst nightmare -- One day I was walking with my homie, he had a gun, and I didn't know that until he shot me twice in the stomach. I fell to the ground and started bleeding just bleeding lying there dying, hella scared. I woke up alive in a cold sweat that was my worst nightmare

**-Haley**

**From The Beat:** That nightmare is horrifying for real - and what's worse is that it comes pretty close to what reality can be like out on the streets. On the other hand - the dream you describe sounds like a dream worth fighting for. Do you plan to go to college?

## My Grandmother

My granny is not the oldest person in my family but that's the person I love very much even though I have not been the most respectful grandchild.

My granny's name is Alice Grayson. She's sixty-years-old ...she has four kids -- one girl (who is my mother) and three boys (who are my uncles).

My granny has nine grand kids and one great grand kid. She takes care of all her grandkids even though their mothers are there. I love her very much!

**-Malika**

**From The Beat:** You must be a pretty tight family, with so many grandchildren. Do you think she would agree that you have not been the "most respectful" grandchild? What would she want you to do differently?

## Stuff I'm Going Through

What's good Beat? Man I'm goin through stuff but nobody understands me man. I'm stuck in a tight spot. Man, I been in and out of the hall for the past 4 months. Man, I'm still trying to pimp this camp shhh. But it's crazy up here and the stuff I'm going through is making me mad.

My girl is leaving to Atlanta soon, and my grandmother is soon. When I get out though, I'm gonna stay with my girl, she the one I want to be with. I met her 6 years ago and it took her a week to get with me.

But we've been together for a long time. My grandma used to take care of me but now I take care of myself. She is 59, not a lot of people see that age. When I talk to her she tells me to be good all the time, and I tell her I'm gonna be good. If she thought I wanted to run she would be really mad.

**-Young Ak**

**From The Beat:** How do you feel about moving to a new city? You are so lucky to have two people who love you and care about you, and who you love and care about back. Six years is a long time, and the kind of love that is born from that is completely personal and unique.

## One Wish

If I had one wish I will wish that I could get out of Alameda county juvenile hall, and go home to my family.

And one day I could come a doctor or something, and start my life over. And I wish that I was rich. I wish that I could become a cannabis doctor, so I could help people out with their pain.

I wish that one day I will wake up and be back on the block with my brother and be making that money again. Like they said once you get in the game it's no getting out RIP Dam I love you brother. The end...

**-Charles**

**From The Beat:** Who says it's no getting out? We know a lot of people who got out. Some of them ARE doctors now. Others are staff in your own facility, or in our offices. We're not saying it's easy, but if you have big dreams, don't be afraid to follow them.

## I Take A Risk

I take a risk every time I'm on off a pill

I take a risk cause I can't control how I feel

I take a risk every time I grab a bottle and drink

I take a risk cause I can't control the way I think

I take a risk every time I grab my clip and reload

I take a risk every time I go in beast mode

It's a lot of risk I take but still I stand

It ain't no turning back I can't stop being who I am

**-Young Art**

**From The Beat:** Seems to us, from the talent and wisdom you show in your writing, that it's the opposite. You need to stop being who you are NOT (a doomed thoughtless drunk, drugged kid with no future) and start being who you ARE: A thoughtful, intelligent, observant young man with the potential for greatness in side you. So yeah, stop being who you aren't, start being who you are. Peace.

## Baby Cakes

My name is Baby Cakes. People say ain't nothing baby 'bout them cakes! I like ice cream and I want a burrito very bad. I need some candy and I am sleepy and am ready to go home to my eight brothers and am ready to go to a party and shake my shhh.

**-Baby Cakes**

**From The Beat:** You value your freedom and you're missing the pleasures of life on the outs right now, but if you keep getting into bad situations and having run-ins with the law, then you're going to keep coming back to the hall. Don't be in denial about your detention and its consequences.

## Real-Life Story

What's really real wit' my ninjas  
Stressing 'bout seein' five or better  
Wishing they had a blessing

Thinking 'bout the time made you witness protection  
Why the sports maker had to win the election  
Why Bobby got made when Whitney went broke  
Why the world gotta know that Bobby smoke dope  
Why Wayne got rich and left Terk hella broke  
How everybody know DMX snort coke  
Why a lot of people starving when the world so rich  
Why life on the streets has to end like this  
Why Bush have to say that it been like this  
Why we always need a gun to defend our shhh  
Why they kill Escobar when he got rich  
Then the police have to do the bootsiest shhh  
Why me and my homies gotta live like this  
Bush got a white house I want a crib like his  
But the me with ya'll say be the funny's shhh.

**-Lil' Dirt**

**From The Beat:** This piece flows well, and you pose some very interesting questions. Try and take one of the ideas that you're thinking about, and delve deep into it. We're looking forward to reading more from you. You've got quite a writing talent.

## Fear Versus Respect

Daddy always told me that respect is something you must earned.

Fear is something forced into someone.

**-Son**

**From The Beat:** Your father sounds like a very wise man. Did he drop any other knowledge you could share with The Beat?

## Locked Up And Frustrated

Man being in this place with four walls is making me crazy.

Tomorrow is my court date, hope I get out. Missing the fam', my female, my ninjas. Hopefully when I get out tomorrow there's gonna be a lot of changes in my life. Gonna get a job to help the fam' pay the bills, my court restitution.

Man, just tryin' to get back on my feet, all the struggles. I ain't giving up.

If I quit now I'm a quit for the future, so I can't back down now. I'm a get out and I'm a stay out of here. There's more things in life then jail, and getting in all the trouble, and making the fam' worried. That's about it y'all. Good luck to ya'll going through the hard struggles.

**-Liger**

**From The Beat:** You seem to see what you're missing out on, and are using that to motivate you to make the necessary changes. You have the right idea, all you need is a plan. How are you going to get that job? Like you said, don't quit. You can do it.

## This Is Real

What it do? They call me Lil' Knuckles, and I'm from Livermore.

I was just tryna let ya'll know what are some things that I just hate. One thing that I really hate is when you walk up in a unit and you meet someone and they talking 'bout (oh yeah, I'm a homeboy woop woop), then you ask around 'bout him and don't no one know that person. So don't tell me you're a homeboy if you are not, why you gon' try to be something you're not?

And if you do decide to start bangin then learn what you're bangin for. So I ain't got nothing to do with y'all who bang in the hall but are scared to bang on the streets.

**-Lil' Knuckle**

**From The Beat:** Try not to concentrate so much on what other people are doing. Instead, concentrate on yourself, and your own life. Use this time to reflect on your own actions, because the truth is, others will do what they will, you can't control it. You can only control yourself.

## Stop running

This goes out to all those people who keep running from programs cause I'm one of them. Running ain't done nothing but help me ruin my life. I say that because it keeps me in the system, which keeps me away from my loved ones.

Plus, it really ain't no reason to run because in some way you gon' have to finish your time, it's just on you. Sometimes these programs be easy or in jail which is way hard. Next time before you go, think of how it's affecting your future. That's it, think wisely.

**-Darnell**

**From The Beat:** You've recognized that you can't run away from your problems. You're going to have to deal with it at some point, and you know that it's better to just get it over with, and move on from it, than to try and avoid it. Keep your head up and get through your time, so that you can get out and move on.

## Succeed Not Fail

Me and my ninjas been touching stacks

Stop playing lil' ninja these true facts

When its funk season we bring out big guns

Stuck in the hall locked up with high bail

I'm a get out one day and succeed not fail

Still do my thing and still bang on sight

Ask about Purp 'cause I slide every night

Smoking dro' and sipping bo' got me high as a kite

When my ninjas touch down we gonna eat, it's only right

We all we got.

**-Young Purp**

**From The Beat:** We chose Succeed not fail for your title because that's what we hope you do. You have so much talent and determination, working hard on your writing each week - we think you could do a lot better for yourself than fall victim to the street mentality that has killed so may of the people you care about. But you need to look up and see more than just the block!

## Let Me Out

The system needs to leave me alone. I know I do stuff to get in here but the consequences are harsh. They think that lockin' us up in a room is gonna do the trick? Nope, not at all. It causes anger, pain, stress, etc. Things that make criminals want to pop. So let me out.

**-Hus**

**From The Beat:** If doing time doesn't seem to work, we're wondering what you think would be a better consequence to breaking the law. If you were in the position to change the system, what would you do, keeping in mind that some sort of consequence needs to happen to keep the peace on the outs?



## Stop Complaining

Today I'm writing about people who instead of taking charge of their life would rather complain. Situations like this, I'm in the hall because of a bad choice I made, so it would be stupid to be complaining about the situation if it's my fault.

I hear a lot of people say "man I'm gonna miss my mama's birthday," or "I gotta baby at home that need me," or just "I miss my family." Stuff like that to me makes no sense 'cause if you got all that, why do what you do to come in?

'Cause for me, instead of complaining I plot on what I can do to better myself for when I do get out, whenever that's going to be. But I just really want to say to all these whiners, stop acting like a baby and take your consequences as a man, that's it.

**-Darnell**

**From The Beat:** Accepting the consequence for something you've done is important, and you realize that. But at the same time, everyone makes mistakes, and we all have feelings of sadness when we're not with these we love. On the upside, you know that you have to change, and you know that in order to get to a more positive place, you just have to get through your time, and deal with the punishment.

## Life on The Edge

At times I live life on the edge... oneway that I put my life at risk is selling drugs.

My life is extremely perilous and now that I am getting older my life feels like it's getting even tougher! Bummer. I know I got to do something about changing my ways, because GOD is an awesome god and also forgiving, I do have Him in my life... slowly but quickly I will be delivered.

**-New New**

**From The Beat:** According to everything you know about God and about your life, what do you need to do to help deliver yourself from the struggles you've had? Is it only about waiting and praying, or is there some responsibility that you need to personally take?

## This Sucks

I really hate it here. I wanna go home.

**-Samantha**

**From The Beat:** Short and sweet! We hope you get home soon.

## Blood Stained Streets

Risk is high speeding with all kinda stuff in ya trunk,  
Coke in ya lap wit' that mentality of I don't give a shhh  
And it's cool for a minute but then here all the haters  
come

Thinking they gonna come and take some stuff,  
Time to load that kater up  
Two fingers later bra

All head shots then you need more then just a prayer  
bra

I'ma see ya later bra

You can't be taken seriously in these streets if you don't  
take a risk

Ninja catch you on the avenue they pullin' out like ninja  
take this

Blood stained street

Here comes the city -- try and paint it

**-Dante**

**From The Beat:** Is it worth it? We understand the temptation, and we know that things are usually more fun when they are risky, and especially when there is a chance of getting caught, but high speeding with stuff in your trunk? You're as good as got. Your last two lines are absolutely beautiful, though. Really detailed imagery.

## Better Than That

So young, so cute, mommy's (oldest) christmas baby.  
Bay bay kid but innocent. With big dreams and goals, a  
heart full of joy and happiness, and most of all a virgin  
-- not to boys (men), -- but to the world.

I didn't know anything but what I saw, the gang-  
banging, the drugs, the money and most of all, the men....  
Yea I'm Lady Floss got turned out to the game of fast  
money, cars, clothes, abuse physically and emotionally. I  
thought it was because I didn't have a father figure in my  
life, maybe so but I shouldn't use that as a crutch to lean  
on because I'm in jail. I'm going to be better than that. I  
will be a better mother than he was father to my child.

**-Lady Floss**

**From The Beat:** When we think of your talent and potential in the future, it's not you we feel bad for but your father, because he isn't getting the joy and pride of having raised you.

## I'm tired

I'm tired of being in this juvenile hall place  
I'm tired of being locked in my room staring into space  
I'm tired of looking at the four walls and think  
I'm tired that my life can be taken in a blink  
I'm tired of sleeping alone at night  
Without a girl to hug and be your light  
I'm tired of thinking of my mom and dad  
Wonderin' if they happy or if they sad  
I'm just tired of all theses things around me  
Please Lord come save me!

**-Buenafior**

**From The Beat:** You can save yourself. Once you get out, you can take the steps to be there for your family, and have them be there for you. Use the discontent you feel in juvenile hall as motivation to not come back.

## Which Way To Go

Which way to go never know  
Do you wanna go listen to this flow  
As I go dumb just tryin' to have fun  
In that club off that Bacardi 151  
Cops on my ass chasing me this way that way  
But you know I never crash high speed they cant catch  
me I'm so fast  
I'm like a bullet as I pass  
I'm comin' for that ass  
I'm the one you see pass  
I'm the one you suckers tried to gas  
But I'm back from the past sportin' Everlast  
I'm guaranteed to last

**-Lil' One**

**From The Beat:** It's good to see you rhyme/after all this time/too much talent locked up - that's the crime/put it down again to spit your state of mind!

## I Love My Grandma

My grandma is what keeps our family from fallin' apart.  
Our family is very tight.

If something goes down with one family member our  
whole family knows and we all get involved. My grandma  
told me one thing I would never forget: A woman's  
virginity and self-value is like a pot of gold. Always love  
yourself, don't give yourself away. Have unconditional  
love for yourself.

**-Jasmine**

**From the Beat:** Wow, your grandma sounds like a strong and powerful woman. What are some of the other things she has taught you?

## The Family Jewel

The oldest person in my family is my sister. She is 24 years old. My big sister could be so mean sometimes, but she is mostly nice. My big sister means a lot to me because she has always taken care of her younger brothers and sisters. I have learned a lot of things from my big sister. She plays a big role in my life. I love my big sis.

**-Combo**

**From The Beat:** Even if she is "mean sometimes," you are very lucky to have an older sister who looks out for you. We bet she's sacrificed a lot of things she wanted to do for y66ou and your brothers and sisters. The best way to pay her back is to find a way to stay out of this place!

## A Fool Or A Father

When I was little I didn't have no father. I didn't start knowin' him until I was about 12, and I'm only 15. Yeah, that's a damn shame.

I'll never run out on my kids. I know a lot of people say that, but I'm telling the truth, 'cause that not the type of dude I wanna grow up to be.

My grandma and my mama raised me and my uncles. I wouldn't want to have my grandma watchin' my kids. I mean, I would ask her sometimes, but not all the time. But yeah man, I'ma be there fo' mines. What about chu?

**-Fee G**

**From The Beat:** Raising children is the most important job anyone can take on. So we hope you remember these words when the time comes. Being there for your kids is a parent's first responsibility.

## Hoping For A Different Future

What's up with The Beat? Man, this my fourth time in here and once again, one of these days is gonna be something special. The first time I was in, my mom's birthday come up. And now I got my girl pregnant and I don't know if I'm going to be there for the birth of my kid. I'm trying to see if I could get out before, but I got to go to 33rd Ave. for 90 days.

But at the same time, I'm hella happy that I'ma have a little man. But hopefully I get out early 'cause my first plan is to get a job and be happy with my baby mamma. But I hope that I'm gonna be a better dad than what I had.

**-Lil' Wino**

**From The Beat:** We understand your excitement about becoming a father, but the fact that you are here for the fourth time while your girl is out there carrying your baby suggests that you're not ready for the responsibility that is part of the definition of "father." We hope this is your last experience under the control of strangers. It's time for you to take control of your own life... so that you can become truly responsible for the new life that you have created.

## The Beast

What's good with The Beat? This yo' boy V-Guttah holdin' it down. Ha ha ha! That's all I do in here is laugh at all them haters, even the judge and all them. All they can do its hold the beast in his cage.

I can't wait 'til they let me out. Ha ha ha! I'ma be doing my thang when I'm out while I'm down. I hope all y'all out there have fun, you dig, 'cause once the beast hits touchdown, it's a rap, you dig.

So yeah, all to my ninjas that's doing time in any program, keep y'all head up and remember we do time, time don't do us.

**-V-G**

**From The Beat:** You can "laugh at them" all you want, but that doesn't change reality. And the reality is that as long as you do the things that brought you here before then you can count on losing out again. There's an old saying, which goes, "He who laughs last, laughs best." Any idea what it means?

## Risk

A risk for me is when I'm on the block every day. Anything can happen to me. But I put myself in those type of situation, so I can't complain. But it be poppin' — always something to do and money to make, and yo' homies that you grew up with.

**-D-Mac**

**From The Beat:** Keep making money on the block, and you'll keep making money for your keepers.

## Story Of My Life

What's good? I'ma write about my life. When I was born at Kaiser. At about five or six, I really don't remember, but I went to Edison. Some of the ninjas I used to mess with there turned into enemies.

After Edison, I went to Everet. Now that's when I first start goin' beast mode in 6th, just start blowin' in 7th. I started to come outside in 8th and I was with the toast and takin' that one ninja lunch money and chasin' him.

Then after that super beast mode, 9th grade, I started messin' with some kids. I had to pull the toast out. Word got back to the Dean, and a ninja got expelled. Then I just said, "Forget it," and wasn't in school. Then a ninja got shot and I had to go hard, and ended up here...

I had to cut it short because Albert Einstein, aka Mike, said, "Time up."

**-Trill**

**From The Beat:** You know, of all the frightening things you write about in this abbreviated "story of your life," the one decision we think you'll regret the most as you mature out of boyhood and into adulthood is the decision to quit school. You can't know, from your age and where you sit, just how important to your future a high school diploma is. We hope you reconsider that poor choice, and at least try to get your GED.

## A Moving Target

What's good with The Beat? Yeah, I take risks every day just being on the block every day, for real, 'cause anybody could slide through the section. And that mean I'm just a target 'cause I'm just there all day. But they say a moving target can't get hit, so I might is well move.

**-Lil' Cali**

**From The Beat:** A target — moving or still — is still a target! Both you and we know far too many young men who were moving, but who will never move again because of the risks they were taking.

## I Want To Be

First than everything, I'm someone's father or daddy. I say this because I'm not able to be there to be the father I want to be. I been away for a year. She is almost 15 months old, and here I'm in this jail. Facing two to four years in hell, away from Lavelle, is a jail to some people. But to me, it's like hell, that I can't escape, and my punishment is to be away from my lil' love, Lavelle and not bein' able to live the life that me and my girl created.

I say I be there, and now I be here, I think I tell myself where? If time is running and not coming back, this makes me feel bad. It made me sad, first to think of the dead ones. I say to everyone I was to be, now here is me not even bein' able myself to be free, four walls of concrete, surrounding me, my mind killing me!

Shhh! How can this be! When all I want is to be the best father that you will ever meet.

**-Diablito**

**From The Beat:** You're right, Diablito, this is a real setback in your desire to be the "best father" you can be. But it is only a setback, not a permanent condition. So just keep your eyes on the prize, do what you have to and not what you're tempted to do, and put all this behind you.

## Risk

To many risks Lano take  
Posted on the block, staying out late  
Police come, I am ready to shake  
Always shining, jealous gone hate  
Just call me Lano the Great

**-Young Lano**

**From The Beat:** We can call you Lano the Great if you want, but as long as you continue to take the risks you write about here, then the Great Lano will not be free. He'll either be a slave to the block or a slave to the system. Pity the Great Man!

## Beefin' For Dead Presidents

I understand that my ninjas is sick!  
How sick? Try to cross this and its consequences hit a  
ninja in the neck  
Got his tonsils lifted to the side of the road where car  
had drifted, rip ninjas to shreds  
Got us beefin' for nothin' mo' than presidents that's  
dead And where I stand, it's a thin line between love and  
hate And where you stand it's a thin line between the  
heat and yo' face  
No time to waste  
Ninjas ain't playing in these fields, it's real  
Ninjas get killed in these fields, it's the y2k like my  
ninja say  
Ninjas give me room  
Females make way tattoo  
I'm scarred up my heart is scarred up  
So I got no feelings  
The block gone keep killin', the paper is nothing  
Ninjas wanna die then keep on stunting

**-Cal**

**From The Beat:** We're not completely sure whether you're warning everyone in the beef to grow up and move on, or whether you're speaking only to some set other than yours. We hope you're talking to everyone, including yourself, because that last sentence is too tragically true: if you wanna die, then keep on stunting.

## Fool Or Father

A fool or a father? I had none — or I guess you can say I had both. I had somebody in my life that thought he was my father. When the man was drunk, the man would be a fool — act like a fool, be disrespectful just like a fool — when I was messing up or when I was doing great.

**-Rebellious One**

**From The Beat:** We wish you'd spend more time on the details. You set these pieces up very well, but then you don't follow through with examples from your own experience. There is much, much more you could have told us — about who this "man" is, about how he was when he wasn't drunk, about what your relationship with him is now, and so much more. A great Beat piece is in the details.

## Life Is Good

Risk is when you put your life on the line for what you do. In the 'hood, it's all a risk 'cause you could be gone any second, whether the next place for you is in a casket or just getting locked up. Maybe being in the halls could be a good thing, 'cause you never know what would have happened if you were in the streets.

I still prefer to be free, but when I'm out I be doing things smart. Staying on my toes ready for anything to happen. Watching my back for the cops and my enemies, 'cause my life is good and I want it to last.

**-Silent Mongo**

**From The Beat:** So, if you love your life, why would you take risks that could lead either to losing your freedom or losing the whole game? We agree that you risk a lot all the time by posting on the block. Our question is this: what do you risk by leaving the block?

## I Miss Her

I miss her so much. I miss the times where we stay up late at night talking to each other on the phone until one of us fell asleep. I miss those times where I'm right next to you, talking to you and hugging you. You're always here for me, and just to let you know, I will always be here for you.

I was stressing a lot and always depressed. I was going through a lot, and every time I needed somebody to talk to, you were there. I remember we be talking about our problems and giving advice to each other. You made me happy, and now that I'm locked up, I'm away from you. Can't talk to you!

Damn! I miss you. I think about you all the time, every day. Shouldn't have got locked this time. I miss you

**-Ramon**

**From The Beat:** You're so right, Ramon, you shouldn't have got locked this time. It shows her (and us) that something was more important to you than love, at least at the moment you were doing whatever it was that led you here and away from her. We hope this experience is like a cold bucket of ice water in your face, and that you won't have to repeat to learn what you need to learn in order never to come back again!

## The Biggest Risk

My biggest risk was when I was being stupid, not listening to no type of body — not my friends, my mom, or my dad, brother, nobody! Me just being me! So one night I went to go hang out with my boyfriend and his friends and a couple of mine. And so we all went to the park. It was cool after a while.

But then one of my friends said the wrong thing to my boyfriend. He got mad at me. I don't know why, but he did. He told me to go check her, but that was my best friend and my ride or die. So in my head ninjas neva come before my fam of my ride or die. So being that person that I am, I didn't check her.

So he got mad, pulled out a knife and cut my hair. I was heated after that so I took off. We was fighting at first, but after he got mad as shhh because he was losing to his girl. So he pulled out his knife and stabbed me three times. Him and all his friends started running. My best friend called the police. I went to the hospital.

It was all good for a while. Then I got a phone call. It was him trying to say sorry and he wanted to get back with me. We had a long talk, but being the person that I am, I forgave him. But now we are just cool now. That's like my play brother kind!

**-Lil' Sis**

**From The Beat:** A boy who will stab a girl is a child. You are lucky that he is no longer your boyfriend, and you would have been a real fool to take him back, whatever lies he tells you (and probably believes himself as he's telling them). It's good that he is "sorry" but we believe he's "sorry" in more ways than one! You're lucky to be alive... and to be rid of him as a boyfriend!

## Me

What's poppin' out the Beat

I can't stand the heat

I'm ready to get out once again and battle with the streets

But ain't that hard 'cause females can't compete

Just to let you know I'ma real G

I stay doing me

**-Kirstin**

**From The Beat:** We took out your inappropriate reference to your weapon. It only makes you sound like a little girl playing with dangerous dolls! We hope you mature into young adulthood before you lose the "battle with the streets." (And by the way, if you can't stand the heat, then get out of the kitchen!)



## Footprints

Man, first it was one set of footprints in the sand  
 Then it was two sets of footprints in the sand  
 When times get hard and stuff hits the fan  
 God don't walk with me, he carry me, man  
 My footprints, some say I walk on my own  
 Some say I move at fast pace  
 Some try to keep up with my steps  
 Some too slow. If you ain't on my hype then you gotta  
 go. People used to always tell me I'm going down the  
 wrong road  
 Some say I got the same footprints as my dad  
 But I say forget them, and put a footprint on they ass  
 As a young ninja, don't know which way to go  
 Wondering if it's going to be my mind or my footprints  
 To show me which way to go.

**-Ran Horn**

**From The Beat:** Who are the "two sets of footprints" you open this poem with? We're not going to tell you that you're going down the wrong road because we think you already know what road you're on and what road you should be on. We only hope that you act on what you know before it's too late...

## Risk

What up Beat? Yeah, this Anto still here getting ready to step out this thang, dawg. But y'all want to know about a risk? Man Beat, it's a risk every day that I go to that block, man. But about mine, Ant gone thug it out 'til my casket drop, you feel me! Me and my YGs, we gone make it. But when you going to rock on that "low" (LOL), you better watch out for them boys, because that's one of the "biggest risks."

**-Anto**

**From The Beat:** The fact that you are here proves how true that last sentence is! You say you're going to "thug it out 'til your casket drops," but how can you be sure? For one thing, nobody knows what's around the next corner. For another, the risks you take on the street don't always lead to caskets — sometimes they lead to wheelchairs, brain damage, or permanent imprisonment. Are all those risks worth taking for the thug life you've chosen?

## The Biggest Risk

The biggest risk that I take every day is selling dope. Yeah, it's risky, but where I'm from, it's either eat or starve. To me it means a lot. Because when you don't have anyone taking care of you, you gotta do what you gotta do to get by.

**-Doddie**

**From The Beat:** Of course, one way to "get by" is to let the county take care of you while you're locked up. It wouldn't be our choice, but at least someone is taking care of you.

## Bull

What's good? This ya boy Money Earn back in this camp for some bull. I mean they really playing me. Yeah, I missed a couple days of school, and violated my stay away order, but I don't think that's enough to send yo' guy to a grouper.

Straight up, if they ship me, I'm getting ghost. I hope they don't though. But yeah, man, I'm in it for the chedda and sky. This shhh will not stop daddy.

**-Money Earn Vern**

**From The Beat:** No one but you is playing you, Vernon. You violated very clear requirements, and you knew very well what the consequences of your choices would be, so only someone unwilling to accept his own responsibilities could point his finger at anyone else for this predicament you're in (again). When you say "this shhh will not stop..." you're absolutely correct. Just keep doing what you do, and you can count on the system doing exactly the same as in the past. Stop playing yourself!

## Risk

I have been taught my whole life that life is all about taking risks. Sometimes we may not know what decision to make. You just have to take the risk and live with the decision that you made.

**-Rebellious One**

**From The Beat:** This is pretty good for a general description of risk. But we were hoping for more — namely some specific examples of some of the risks you have taken over the years, and how you have had to live with the decisions you made.

## Uncle

I miss my uncle very much. He has always been there for me, and when he left, a whole part of me did too. I really miss him and I wish he would come back. When it was announced that he got shot, I didn't care. But now I feel like I betrayed him. I wish he would come, but too bad it's not. He was like my brother. He was a part of me. He was always down to ride, I remember when we used to play fight. I used to hit him and run 'cause when he hit me, I see stars. Peace out.

**-Rackett**

**From The Beat:** We're so sorry your uncle is gone, Rackett, but we also wish that he had cared more about guiding your life than playing in his own. Why didn't you care when you first heard that he got shot? Has his passing changed anything about how you want to live your life?

## I Promise

Hey, 'sup? I'm back in here. I know that I said that I wasn't gonna come back in here, but now I'm stuck in here maybe for a month just because one stupid thing. But I promise this: this time when I get out of here I'll try to not come back in here because if I come back it will be for a year.

**-Jader**

**From The Beat:** But what will make this promise different from the promise you gave before never to come back? What will prevent you from doing another "stupid thing?" Words are important, but deeds count more.

## The Family Jewel

The oldest person in my life is my grandma. She is like another mother 'cause she do what my mother does for me. I respect my grandma more than my parents. She cooks me whatever I want. She buys me what I want.

**-Young Pagest**

**From The Beat:** What do you think your grandma wants most for you? We know the answer, and you know the answer, too. Can you give her what she wants?

## Real Vs. Fake

What's good with The Beat? You know it's that ninja Vell. I'ma talk about how real ninjas do real things, and how fake ninjas is.

I believe in 2008, it's a lot more fake ninjas out there that be getting the game messed up. I play too much, but them window warriors is clowns.

But off the fake, let me talk about real. To me you could just tell who real by they swag. You could see it in 'em, ya feel. Me? All I mess with is real ninjas. I'm out, Beat.

**-Trill**

**From The Beat:** We've read similar pieces many times (and we're sure that those you call "fake" consider themselves "real," and some you may call "real" may be labeled "fake" by others). When you examine your definition of "fake," we'd love to know how such people as MLK, Jr. (who was often in jail) qualify as "fake" or "real."

## She Took Me For a Fool

She took me for a fool.  
 I love you. I cared for you.  
 I stayed by you, never left you.  
 I was a fool. I can't stop thinking of you.  
 Dreaming of you. Man I love you.  
 Two years I'm still in love with you.  
 Trying to have me killed fo' what.  
 Fo' being there fo' you.  
 When you lost yo' baby. I was there.  
 I was the only one who cared.  
 I asked god was I a fool.  
 What did I do?  
 From the first time I saw you  
 My heart wouldn't let me leave you alone, let you go.  
 My tears are fo' you, baby girl  
 I know I hurt you, I was scared.  
 I know you still love me.  
 I gone respect yo' relationship.  
 But I can't help my love fo' you  
 Longin' fo' you.  
 I can see yo' true colors.  
 What's stupid, I still want you dated.  
 We been through too much to let you go.  
 But I got to fo' me to keep going on.  
 To do what I got to do fo' me and my family  
 If it's meant to be I'll see you again.  
 I love you

**-Shannon**

*From The Beat: Some love affairs run their course and are over. Others linger long after they've begun to turn sour. Even if there's always a place in your heart for your first love, you can still move on with your life. As you do, we're willing to bet that love will come again, and when it does, the pain you're feeling now will ebb away.*

## Here For Nothing

Ain't getting out no time soon I think, but I didn't do nothing, really. My PO ain't nobody I'm tryna listen to. Going to get something to eat but went to jail instead. But I ain't gotta steal nothing. I work. I had money this whole summer. But I guess people just don't want me outta jail.

**-Brandan**

*From The Beat: We can't judge your guilt or innocence, but we can tell you that since you are here, not listening to your PO can't be a very good strategy for getting your freedom back. You might want to rethink that.*

## Crazy

Hey, this ya girl Banana up in here. Man, they trying to play a young goon like me. I keep going back to court and they ain't saying shhh. Man, I'm 18 and I'm going crazy up in here. They need to let me out.

I go back to court July 21, '08, and am not going nowhere. How I wish I can go to 850 so I can bail out. I'm done with school, so why do I keep going? Well, its crazy being in ma cell 'cause every time I go to sleep, I be having dreams about my baby.

Well, 1 that's all I can think of right now. But to all, keep ya heads up.

**-Banana**

*From the Beat: When you say you're "done with school," do you mean you graduated? Do you have a diploma? If not, that should be your first priority. If so, then you really don't have to be doing the things that lead to lock-up. But, as long as you continue doing those things (whatever they are), then you can expect the system to continue doing to you what it is doing to you. They may "need" to let you out, but that's not going to happen just because you want it to happen. They system also wants something from you before it does what you want it to do.*

## For The Love Of The Money

What's up with The Beat? Man, it's ya boy G-Baby, and, as you can already see, I'm back in hell. But yeah, everything has a price, even me. I'll sell my soul to the devil if the price was right. Right now it's people getting knocked off for stacks on the streets right now. Money talks, and if you ain't got none, you ain't saying nothing.

But I'm out. I just thought I should put y'all up on game.

**-G-Baby**

*From The Beat: From where you sit, it doesn't appear that the game has been very good to you. You may want to consider selling your soul to an angel rather than a devil...*

## Bout To Be A Father

What's good with The Beat? Me, same thing different day. But yeah, I'm 'bout to be a father. Man, that's the happiest thing pop up in my life. But yeah, the only thing is I'm up in here an' can't be there every step with my baby mother.

But you know, as I am doin' my time, I go get my life together an' come home an' take care of my child an' do what I have to do. But yeah, that's a lil' something on my mind this week.

I'm out. I will be a free man one day

**-Jt**

*From The Beat: Yes, you will be a free man one day, which is why you are right to get your life together now. You've got to be there for your baby so that both of you can be happy.*

## Help Me, God

I want to go home I have been here for 90 days. I'm not going home no time soon. Help me God. I hate the staff.

In five days I'm supposed to get out. I'm tired of going to sleep at 4:30, man, then wake up at 7 over and over. I can't be in here no more. Somebody come at me foul, I'm gonna be mad and beat somebody's ass. I've been fighting a lot. I'm not doin no better, I'm still on step 1. I don't care, as long as I get my rec.

When I get out, I'm getting two burritos.

**-K**

*From The Beat: We wish we had a magic wand we could wave to send you home. But unfortunately, you just have to let the system works its way through. And once that happens — after you eat your burritos — think about what you have to do to stay free. Then do it!*

## YGC: You Got Caught

Back in the halls.

How did I lack the skills to not get caught?

Ran away from group home for a day,

Lay back and drank some grey goose,

Let loose and light a few blunts,

Took flight,

Lost sight

Popped some d's

And stopped by at YGC

Now I gotta stop acting like that,

Get back on the track

And see my loved ones,

This isn't really fun...

**-Goku**

*From The Beat: This fine piece strikes just the right tone/ It gets less and less fun the deeper into the pit you're thrown/ Those drugs you take may feel good/ But who is standing where you once stood?/ We're not sure what skills you had/ But when you're high, they all go bad/ We end with what to us is a simple plea:/ Stop locking up your brain with drugs and set yourself free!*

## Bored

Man, I don't even know what to say. Sittin' up in jail, bored as hell, trying to go home and stop raisin' hell, man. I'm a good kid. I just want to go home so I finish high school.

**-Young Bril**

**From The Beat:** There's only one solution to your problem... When you get out of here, never come back!

## Risk

A risk for me is to be out in the streets now, be like when I'm with my ninjas. We do what we feel, not what we can. Like I know it's bad, but if we somebody we might mess with someone. And that's real shady when I think about 'cause I wouldn't want nobody to do that to me.

Another thing is when I walk around with a cannon. I don't even argue or fight, and that's the worst thing to do is to shoot or even kill a person. I know, can go to jail for that for a very long time, but that the risk I'm willing to take to stay safe.

**-Lee-Boy**

**From The Beat:** We wish we could believe that you really are making yourself safe; but we read too many accounts of how people's guns get misused, causing endless cycles pain. It's not just your life that you say you're willing to risk, it's your family's entire future.

## The Risk

My biggest risk was not going home for two weeks and didn't bother seeing my PO. That risk screwed my life because I could've been applying for jobs and have fun with friends out in the streets. Rather than being locked up right now, having no way out, can't see your own family, can't see your friends, can't do anything you could on the outside than being locked up inside. Now that I risked, I felt like I can't get any closer to my loved ones.

**-Goofy**

**From The Beat:** Maybe you need to try risking making some changes in your life. You've only screwed up a tiny portion of your life. Don't keep making the same mistakes that got you here.

## Everything's A Risk

Risk. It's when you there slippin'. That's a risk most people live, a risk-full life every day because I know I do every day. It's a risk.

Even coming from school is a risk, but I manage to come around all that every day because I try to keep to myself so I won't have to be in all the BS people go through every day.

**-Demarica**

**From The Beat:** Yeah, coming from school can be a risk. But it's an even bigger risk if you don't go to school...

## Risk!

What's good yo? This ya boy Ulala posted up doin' our thang, ya dig... Today, I want to talk 'bout risk.

The shhh me and the goons do every day is a risk, dependin' on whether gettin' locked up or death, ya dig. I'ma just let it be right there 'cause I'm thinkin' so much I can't write it down.

So, to the homies, keep ya head up. Love ya, ninjas!

**-Ulala**

**From The Beat:** We know you can write more than this Ulala. All those... you put in your piece don't make it any longer! It's details we want. Are you willing to risk offending or even losing some of your goons by doing what's in your own best interest, like going to school?

## My Fathers

What's up Beat? This ya man Goku. I lost my real father. Actually, I never knew him. My mom had a boyfriend that stepped up from day one. He had me while my mom was in a program getting together. Then I moved back with my mom, and my uncle stepped in as a father figure. He passed away last year, and now his son is two years old with no father. When I turn 18, I'ma step in and be there.

Now I have a baby on the way. Baby mama is five months, and I'ma give her the father I didn't have. Now I live with my father that stepped in again, and he is mad that I don't listen and I'm 17. What the hell, huh Beat?

**-Goku**

**From The Beat:** Is your "stepfather" right when he complains that you don't listen? After all he sacrificed for you (who isn't even is own flesh and blood), don't you think you owe him the respect of listening to him? We admire you for wanting to be there for your child, but we want to know what you plan to do when you touch down so that you can keep that promise.

## Time Is Growing Short

'S'up with The Beat? Man, shhh been crazy these past few days. PO came to my room and told me if I get into any more trouble, then he going to tell the judge to extend my time. I was hella mad. So now I have to be on my shhh. These past few days, I've been calling staff out their names or what not. This one punk ass staff gave me DRB 'cause I threw my pencil on the desk. I was like, "This dude trippin'." Power trippin' you can say.

Time is going by hella slow. I'm almost out my way towards that door. So I gotta do right. So 'til then. I'll write you guys next week.

**-EB**

**From The Beat:** We're not exactly sure who you were "hella mad" at. You've been calling staff out, throwing pencils, and generally giving staff reasons to discipline you. So, what did you expect your PO to tell you? Short time can be the most dangerous for you, so we hope you keep your eyes on the prize so that when you push on that exit door, it opens...

## Something Else

What's good with The Beat? Man, today this topic is about me. Man, y'all need some better topics. This shhh be wastin' our rec time. But anyway, I been coo' ridin' this time out, holdin' it down. But it been real stressful in here. I been in here for over five months and I wanna make my way home. But yeah, that's all for today. Bye.

**-Harden**

**From The Beat:** Since we always tell our writers that they can write on any topic they choose, we can't understand the complaint about our topics. But you could have made this piece much stronger by telling us what you plan to do after you make your way home, especially if you don't plan to come back to a place like this.

## Can't Live Like This

Yeah, this Young Tone. Man, I'm out here. Ninjas know what's up with me. I been here for a month. Also, I can't wait to get out. But when I do get out, I'm back on the grind, ya dig. Like I said, you knew who this be, Young Tone and I'm gone.

One mo' thing, out there on them streets it's hard. Ninjas dying any age. I can't live this crazy life no mo'. So when I do get out, I'm go change.

**-Young Tone**

**From The Beat:** We hope you're able to keep the promise to change, because that's what's needed to start moving away from this life of lock-ups.



## Father To Myself

In my opinion, I've been a father because I have to raise myself to grow up, be mature, be smart and make smart decisions. I have to give the same to my little brother or friends or maybe even my child. But I ain't tryna go that far.

**-Mind Made Up**

**From The Beat:** Who is being your little brother's father now? What changes do you have to make in your life to be able to stay with him and give him the guidance that only you can give?

## Grams: The Family Jewel

My grandma is my life and my jewels. She taught a young ninja a lot 'bout these streets. She showed me what it is to be a man and how to live. Everybody in the fam take good care of grams. Gram just turned 84 years old. That what you call livin'. She done been through everything. She my heart and my soul. I love you grams.

**-Tb**

**From The Beat:** We wish your grandmother a (belated) happy 84th birthday! Now, if she's the "jewel" who taught you what it is to be a man, then now is the time to be that man. You can say "thank you" to this wonderful woman by staying out of places like this, and telling her that she is the reason why!

## Kanye To The Ranch

What's good with The Beat? I'm chilling, lightweight mad though, you feel me, 'cause I don't want to. But I'm going to the Ranch probably on Friday after three months of rotting in this weak ass-institution. But I'm gone do what I gotta do man so I don't gotta come back to this stuff, dawg for real. I need to get back to my young one and my squad, but I am gone though, dawg.

**-Young Jigg**

**From The Beat:** You also need to make a fundamental choice: Do you want to be there for your young one, or do you want to be there for your squad? If you think you can choose both, your young one will suffer just as you have.

## A Fool Or A Father

I screwed up in my life. Finna do good, ain't comin' back. I learned my lesson for life. Ain't finna do nothing bad no more.

My mom is worried. My dad can't sleep. I don't want to do this to my parents again. I'm truly sorry. If I get out tomorrow, I hope I will attend school, get good grades and never do anything bad.

**-Can't Read Signature**

**From The Beat:** When you start thinking about all the pain and stress you put your family through, it is reason enough to make some changes in your life. If you do what you say you're going to do, you'll make them proud.

## A Peacock In A Cage

What's good with The Beat? Man, this that fly young ninja. I'm just finna put you up on game, real quick. They got a fly young ninja in this thang sittin'. I'm finna be sittin' for a min., too, but it ain't nothin'. I just see it as a minor setback for a major comeback, ya dig!

I ain't finna say no more 'cause that's already too much.

**-Mac**

**From The Beat:** You've hardly said anything at all! How could this be "too much"? We want to know how you're planning to keep this experience a "minor setback." What are your plans for when you walk out the door so that you never have to walk back in?

## Taking Good Risks

I take good risks, like waiting my time until court comes and finally release me. I also thought about taking GED class went I get released so I can graduate for freshmen college. I risk on applying jobs to work out for my future so that I won't have any difficulties in life.

**-Goofy**

**From The Beat:** It's a good plan to get your GED and then go to college. That's the key to a better future.

## The Staff Gettin' On My Nerves

What's up, Beat? This is yo' boy, Enano. I'm almost out this hole. A couple more days and I'm gonna be doing what I want to do.

I ain't got to listen to these staff. They get on my nerves. They think they sick because they got the keys and they think they could talk to us however they feel like, but in a couple of days that's going to change, because I'm gonna be out this Ranch.

I'm going to be home free, but I'm gonna cut it here, so to all doing time, keep yo' heads up. Yo' time is coming. This is yo' boy, Enano, and I'm out.

**-Enano**

**From The Beat:** You're already home, and we at The Beat are so happy for you. We hope being at the Ranch has given you some time to chill and think about developing your talent as an electrician, like your father, and that that vocation will earn you some real money and help you keep your freedom.

## Risk

Man, big dawg, life is a risk, any way you play it. If you a person who work in an office and live a good, God-fearing life, you can get hit by a bus or get into a car crash. The biggest risk anybody in the streets can take is getting caught without cho fire, ya dig?

The risk I took was slidin' to this chick' spot on the other side of town while the squad told me she bad news. Man, I got over there--she on the phone with them ninjas. I overhear her tellin' them everything. Man, I chewed her spot up, not giving a... Ha! Ha! Ha!

**-A**

**From The Beat:** Even with your "fire," you can't guarantee you'll make it home by any nightfall when you hang in the streets every day. If a woman plays you, can you listen to your homies' and leave her alone, instead of seeking revenge?

## I'm An Uncle

I'm up here at the Ranch, chillin' through these gloves so I can knock out this program an' hit these streets on my grown man shhh. I found out a legit way to get my license so I'm gonna hop on that.

An' I'm a uncle now, handclap straight up. My lil' ninja came out early July on the 11th, so that's thug motivation to stay out an' get money the right way.

But this Ranch shhh is coo', but I been here for a week an' seen turkeys while eatin' turkey, coyotes trippin', ponies, cows.

But, damn, I'm eighteen in four days. Feed me! Feed me! Feed me! I'm a beast. I'm black. I'm 'hood, I'm out. Get at me.

**-Young Dunny**

**From The Beat:** Happy birthday! How is it to spend your eighteenth birthday at the Ranch? And congratulations on your new baby nephew. How will you change your life to become a good uncle to him? It must be weird and sad to be eating turkey while you watch the three wild turkeys strut around the Ranch. Does it inspire you to stop eating meat?

## Finally Leaving

What's crackin', Beat? This the homeboy Chunks. Well Beat, I'm finally comin' out the hall. Well Beat, I'm finally leaving this hellhole!

As you all know — or for those who don't — I've been in this unit for almost two years now, fighting a 187 charge. And I'm 'bout to bounce to county jail. I just wanted to say to all the homies in here to stay up and stay strong. No matter how hard shhh gets, just know it ain't the end of the world. Life goes on.

By the time you read this I'll be posted next door in county. But it's coo'. I'll be kickin' it with the homeboys over there. Well Beaters, I'm out. But not gone forever. Look for me in the Beat Without in a couple weeks.

To all in the hall, keep those heads up. Much love.

**-Chunks**

**From The Beat:** Well, of course we will miss your workshop contributions, but we look forward to reading what you send us from county. We have a difficult question to ask you, and if you don't want to answer, we will understand. Without putting yourself in greater jeopardy (don't incriminate yourself), we wonder if you ever think of the victim of that 187. Do you ever wonder about the value of his life and what his loved ones must now go through? Just wondering... But whether you take this on or not, please write us what it's like where you're going.

## Unique Vs. Different

Well, I'm not so much different from everybody but I think I'm pretty unique.

First of all, I don't know many people who have a birthmark on their face like me.

Also, I look so different in the ways I dress when I dress like a cholo I look like a Mexican but when I dress like a skater I look white, LOL, but I like the cholo look better.

And the most unique thing about me is my personality. Even though I'm a gang banger I don't always act like one. Most gang bangers try to act hard all the time but me I just be myself, I'm very funny, nice and generous. I like to give things out to the needy. But don't get me wrong I also have a bad side to me which I don't like to use so I would just like to say stay coo' foo'. But yeah I think I'm very unique from everybody else in some ways.

**-Raymond**

**From The Beat:** You have written an interesting piece. You contrast 'being unique' from 'being different.' 'Being unique' can be thought of as having something distinct about yourself. Thanks for sharing some things that are distinct about you (like your personality and birthmark).

## Takin' Risks

Married to the game so I stay on that paper chase  
Constantly dirty livin' my life at fast rate

All day, every day 211's I premeditate

Keep a gun by my sides or a shank behind the gates  
It's like I'm stuck in a race and I must take 1st place  
'Cause last ain't an option

Police pull me over and it's fences I'm hoppin'  
The machine is in motion, boy there ain't no stoppin'  
From O's to P's from P's to keys is all I'm coppin'

That's how I live my life and I ain't gonna stop  
I'ma stay takin' risks till my last breath or my body is dropped

**-Chunks**

**From The Beat:** "I ain't gonna stop," you said/ As the counselor cautions that "talk is dead"/ Like a parrot in a cage squawking, "I can fly"/ You just keep talking, "I'm gonna ride or die"/ When you open your eyes, what do you see?/ Is it this harsh reality, or a child's fantasy?/ We can admire this poetic art that you're making/ While urging you to change... now that's a risk worth taking!

## The Risk I Took

What's crackin' Beat? Me - just chilling in this unit.

Today's topic is about taking a risk by still smoking bomb. I keep telling myself my PO ain't gonna check up on me. So, I keep smoking.

Then one day my PO called me to come in and bottle. I was hella trippin', like damn, I hope she don't lock me up. Well, I came, bottled for her, then a couple of days later she called my mom and told her I was hella dirty for weed.

My mom told me my PO wanted to talk to me and that she wanted me to come in and see her. I knew what's up. But I came anyway. I knew my PO was going to lock me up, but if so, I thought, I should just get it over with - because I got a son, and if I get it over with my PO told me that if I do 'life skills' I will get out on no probation.

So, I got 120 days. But I'm almost out. I've been locked up since March and now I leave in 24 days. August is when I'm ghost.

By the time this gets in The Beat, I'm gonna be out. I took a risk and it led me in here. Well Beat, that's it til next time. I'm out. To all the homeboys and home girls - stay up.

**-A free mama**

**From The Beat:** That risk falls into the category of foolish risk, doesn't it. When you make a choice that separates you from your child, it should be for a better reason than getting high. It's been a tough lesson. We hope it sticks. Good luck to you.

## A Father

I'm thankful for my pops, because he never went awol on us. He kept it A-1. But yeah, even though we used to argue and stuff, he still supported me and my mom. A couple months before I came in here, we really was tight, like gloves. And he was hurt when me and Lil Bratt came in here. But he said it's a lesson learned. But now we post up like mail boxes and he my sidekick, and I'm Batman, ya dig.

My advice to everybody struggling out there, stay up and keep it lit. Well, Im gonna end it right here. Peace in the middle east.

**-Sha T**

**From The Beat:** You're a lucky one, to have a caring dad. Think more than once next time you're tempted to risk your freedom. Add up the consequences. Choose wisely. Good dads don't grow on trees. Appreciate what you have.

## Life On The Edge

There is a lot of risks I have taken. But I think the biggest one was selling dope. I think it's the biggest risk because you never know who you're selling it to.

A lot of people say don't slang to people you don't know, but when you start getting money you get greedy and sell to anyone. I used to be like that (not selling to someone I don't know), like not answering restricted, and not answering if I didn't know the number.

But I eventually I started selling to anyone that needed it. I think that I did that because of greed, then I sold to a Narc, and got locked up. And now I do wanna stop the drug life, but never know what will happen. But 'ey, I gotta make money, right.

**-Dragon**

**From The Beat:** You're making money right now, for all the people who have "processed" you through the system, from cops to judges. And they're al grateful to you for putting money in their pockets... Selling dope to narcs is only one of the grave risks you take in that business. We have a friend who took a couple of bullets and is now very seriously brain-damaged because he sold weed to the wrong thug...

## Risky And Foolish

Well I'm gonna talk about something risky. One day, I took my little baby sister to the store down the street to buy candy. Well on the way there I seen some of my enemies. I was worried because I didn't wanna get down with those fools in front of my baby sister, so I just told her to go inside the store while I handled my business. Once I finished handling them I grabbed my baby sister and went home.

When I got home my sister said "Why were you fighting?" I felt bad because I don't want my sister seeing that shhh and growing up like me. Anyways I just told her I was playing and to not tell mom. But that's a risk I'll never take.

**-Big Bro**

**From The Beat:** No matter how much you try to protect someone, they will always find out what you're doing. So if you really want to protect them the only way is to change what you do. You gotta lead by example. As for your name, Viewstero, you need a new one in our pages, given what you want your name to represent.

## Being A Role Model

Today I'm going to write about going to Colorado. This is probably my last time writing to The Beat.

When I go to Colorado I'm going to pimp my program and get this over with. I'm just going to ignore all those hating ass females over there.

I'm going to miss everyone, especially my family. And all of my friends, but yeah, who wouldn't?

Anyways, this is my third time being locked up and something just finally clicked. I actually learned something this time. I just want to do good and start being a role model for my younger brothers.

My brother Jose came in here for a day and when I found out, it hella hurt me. I never want to see any of my brothers in here. Well, I'm going to cut this right here.

**-A maturing sister**

**From The Beat:** OK. Thanks for participating. If you get this issue, we'd love to hear from you. Tell us what it's like in Colorado.

## My Big Risk

My big risk is when I kept getting high and drunk and I kept saying that I won't ever get caught by the cops. And look at me now. I am locked up and I don't like being in here. I forget that I am locked up and I wake up in the morning and see white brick walls around me.

Damn, I try so hard not to get into any fights, and when I have a problem I talk to the staff about my problems.

I have been in this unit and I only have two more weeks left. I can't wait to get out of here.

**-Mama**

**From The Beat:** The big question is: have you learned something from this experience. Sounds to us like you need some help with your substance abuse problems. Ask, and you will get the help you need. Don't ask, and you're taking a big chance. It's not so difficult to ask. Give it a try.

## The Biggest Risk

The biggest risk I ever took was walking through this neighborhood park hella late at night. I was thizzin' and I was walking around Sunnyvale. I turned around and these fools started chasing me. So I learned to stay away from that park.

**-Sober now**

**From The Beat:** Sounds to us like thizzin' is the bigger risk. You'd have more luck crawling on your hands and knees through a den of hungry tigers. Keep thizzin' and you'll destroy your brain, for sure.

## A Cheating Risk

This one time I took a risk. I was at my pad with some older hyna. I told her she had to leave earlier, but she wouldn't listen. Instead she was on me, and my lady kept calling me. So this is what I did. I gave her this older hyna what she needed and let her bounce. But my lady found out. So I had a lot of making up to do. So that was my risk.

**-Big Spooky**

**From The Beat:** Risks don't always work out. So try to make it up to her, or try to find the right kinds of risk to take, ones that are better for everyone, or at least better for you.

## My Last Beat

Well, this will be my last Beat. I'm getting out on Monday and I'm getting off probation. This is my last time in the hall, too, 'cause I'm 18. Well Beat, thanks for everything, and I'm out.

**-Lil' Cassy**

**From The Beat:** We thank you for participating in our program and we wish you well. Do good.

## Being A Father

What's good. It's Baby Boy up in here. Well me, I'm doing good, but y'all know, I'm a dad now. I'm so happy!

Now I'm at risk of losing my girl, because if someone tried going for my girl, I'd get violent, you know. But baby I love you and miss you! Well, I've been tryin' to be a good dad, but it's so hard. But when I get out I'm going to be a good dad and start being around.

**-Baby Boy**

**From The Beat:** It's almost impossible to be the kind of dad you'd like to be when you're locked up. Being a good dad, in your case, means taking care of yourself, getting your act together, staying out of jail. And we suggest you take some parenting classes, when you get back home. Being a good dad doesn't happen just because you want it to. You can learn a lot from folks who've done it right. But you have to ask for that kind of help. We hope you're ready to get a bit humble.

## Play At Your Own Risk

What's up Beat and Beat readers. I hope all is well and everything is going good for all, despite your current situation. And that everyone's keeping their heads at level, shoulders square, and maintaining a solid composure.

Pues tonight's topic is "Risk." I've taken hella risk! I take risks everyday. I like to play at my own risk. You only live once, so Im gonna live it to the fullest. I take risks everyday, especially on the outs.

My biggest risk was in January '08. I was walking by my rivals hood and I was by myself. And there were girls from the opposite side. I wasn't gonna run, so I stood my ground. They could've killed me but they didn't. I just got my ass beat! But I didn't care. I'm a soldier. That was one of many risks.

Life's all about taking risks. You got to live life to the fullest.

Pues Beat and Beat readers. That's it until next time. Your home girl's out. With mucho love, honor, respect, and my sincerest loyalty. To all who know me - stay up. Maintain solid composure. Much love. I'm gone....poof...ghost....

**-India**

**From The Beat:** Some risks are worth taking and other risks are simply foolish. We hope you develop the wisdom to know the difference. To us, the risk you describe doesn't sound worth taking. We'd run, to avoid a beating. We'd try to not set ourselves up for a beating, in the first place. Most violence is unnecessary. The wiser choice would be to avoid it, when you can.



## Life Threatening Risk

I took way too many risks in my life, but when I think about my biggest risk - it was doing way too many drugs at once. Before I came here I was blowing it.

My typical weekend was smoking hella blunts, drinkin' hella bottles, drinkin', poppin' pills, doing hella lines until couldn't sniff no more. I was hella stupid. I didn't know my limit. I only OD'd once. I took hella pills but thank God, nothing happened. My head's all messed up now.

**-Cindy**

**From The Beat:** So, you've been separated from the drugs and alcohol for a while now. You've had an opportunity to see the world, and your place in it, more clearly. Are you preparing yourself for the challenges of freedom. It always comes with responsibility attached. Ready or not, the world will be at your doorstep soon enough. If you'd like a permanent address in the land of freedom, start paying the rent. You'll most likely need help, if the behavior you describe above is typical. So ask for it. There's plenty of it available. It's waiting for you, if you ask.

## Changes And Smiles

I know I've made bad choices and disappointed my family more and more everytime I came home high or drunk. Everytime and everyday the cussing and the yelling, the putting down - but there's hope for change.

Change - change is what I'm waiting for - to get the opportunity to show the world, and especially the people that look down on me because of the choices that I made. Forgiven - forgiven is what you, mom and daddy are. We can be more of the family we've struggled to be. And happy - happy is what I'll be when I see the smiles on your faces.

**-Jessica**

**From The Beat:** Hard work - hard work is what you'll need to commit to, if you want to heal the wounds and have that future we know you'd like. So - work hard, work hard.

## Old Days

Getting drunk with the homies

I'll be sipping on some drink

getting drunk off the 211

going back to the 7/11

getting some more drinks.

this makes me think

I really love beer

I wish I had it near

so it could be like back then

sipping on some henn

go on and party on the block

staying up all night like a hog

keeping the hood on lock

this party is hella sick

saw a hyna kinda thick

she looks pretty fine

from a one - ten I give her a nine

so I took her for a ride

were at her pad getting down

listening to some oldies I like the sound

now I'm chilling

and I like the feeling

maybe tomorrow it'll happen again.

Till next time Beat.

**-Spooky**

**From The Beat:** It sounds like it wasn't the beer that made the times great, it was the people. If you want to get good times back, you need to try to find the people that are the best for you, because other stuff fades and just doesn't work by yourself. Handle your liquor problem, or laugh at us now, but see in the end who has the last laugh.

## Riskin' it

What is life without a risk?

A boring ass life, that's what it is.

So that's why we risk close to everything.

We have to live it up shhh,

we all risked our freedom for some fun or for the rep of our hoods and now we're not free anymore. Screw it though. Me and all the homies seem to have fun here. We just fool with the system folk for our entertainment.

What can they do? Lock you up?

So that's why most people take risks

some people don't got shhh to lose. So I'm out.

**-Shabbs**

From the Beat: All we can say is that it's not much fun to wake up at age 40 with nothing. Even if it's fun for a while, people who only look for fun end up in the worst situations, and those are never fun. Man up!

Getaway

This spot is lame

I wish I could just fly away.

so I can be all I can be

and you wouldn't be able to find me.

If you did you will say why did come all this way.

I would tell you that I had died

that's why I came to fly.

So I can meet my mother in the sky

forever I'll be' till the end of time.

**-Kali**

**From The Beat:** As good as that seems sometimes, to just escape everything, there is always a cost. No one who cares about you would ever want that, even your mother in the sky.

## A Real Dad

Whats up Beat? I want tot talk about being a real dad. When I get out I'm gonna get a real job, go to school. Me and my hyna have been planning on having a kid but I don't really know yet because it's a big responsibility. I know that if I do decide to have a kid that I'll be a man and take care of my child and I'd be willing to make a change. Well that's it for today Beat! Alrato.

**-Looking Into The Future**

**From the Beat:** Planning for the future and being responsible is definitely a great thing. But having a kid is a huge decision, and you shouldn't rush into anything. Part of being responsible is not taking on before you can handle it.

## My Room

A place that makes me feels safe is my room at my house. When something happens, I can go to my room and it feels like the cops can't get me, nobody.

**-Staying Home**

**From The Beat:** Do you program and stay in your house/room!

## My Thought

I agree too many "fathers" are missing from homies including mine. They aren't men if they can't hang with raising a kid. Instead they leave the mothers to take care of the child. They say men are stronger than women, it's not true mentally. It's cool I made a man out of me by my older homies and a respectful person from my mom. I would reject my dad if he wanted to come back in my life. I love my mom like hell.

**-Pee Wee**

**From The Beat:** You make a good point. It doesn't show much strength to run away. And we're glad you're taking the best from your upbringing. We hope you really have become and are becoming a real man.

## Stupid Risk

Q-vole Beat? What is life without taking a risk carnal? I took risk one day to fight after school at a bus stop. And what happened he switched on me and my homeboy. We got kicked out of school. I smoked some bud, while on hemp got a new charge, assault with a weapon – my feet. And now I'm lookin' at the Ranch. I'll just probably run.

**-Negro**

**From The Beat:** Stop being the fool younsta! You'd be surprised what people can do if they want to regarding change. Whether you want to or not is another issue, and maybe it's just a matter of looking around and seeing what's important to you.

## A Good Father To Be

Me being a fool, screw that. I'm about to be a father. All I know is I'm never going to abandoned my kid. That's on everything! I'm going to teach my kid to never ever say 'no' to me.

I grew up without a father - just my mom and step father, who would always beat my butt when I was little. There was nobody there to guide me.

I learned and experienced the hard way. So I'm going to be there for my kid so he don't end up like me. I'm going to teach him everything I know about what's wrong and what's right. I'm going to be a good father. That's all I know.

**-P Coco**

**From The Beat:** Being a good dad is hard work. It takes a lot of love and dedication. And it's "on the job training". But you know, from tough experience, how not to do it. And you can use that as a starting point. Be good P. Do it right.

## A Father Takes Care Of His Babies

What Barack Obama saying is true. Every man is a fool and every fool can have and make a baby. Only a fool leave the babies. A father is a man, and what he does is take care of the babies and be there for them for the rest of their life. Work and put food on the damn table, man.

**-Thoum**

**From The Beat:** What's even worse is that long before a boy matures into a man emotionally, he is already mature physically. So, babies get made without giving a second thought to what it means, and long before the children making these babies can even provide for themselves. We hope you take your own advice, so that when the time comes, you are a real father.

## The Safest Place

What's up Beat, I think the safest place is my house because I can't get in any trouble there, and you can stay away from cops 'cause they mess with you all the time. Well that's it for now!

**- Indio**

**From The Beat:** Then, we are going to pretend we are doctors, and we are going to prescribe you to stay home where's safe. Can you do that?

## The Hood Jewel

I'll have to say my family jewel is my Uncle Ron. He's from my hood, the first generation and he is very well respected and homeboys look up to him. I love him and I hope he's doing good up in El Salvador which is where he got deported, but hopefully he comes back 'cause I know he will! Late Beat.

**- Nephew**

**From the Beat:** We hope he does. Your uncle sounds like to the homies he is a wise man, but can he live a life legitly and stay away from situations that will get him exiled from your community?

## Going To The Ranch

What up Beat! Well today I'm going to write about what they sentenced me to. Well I went to court on June 30th and I got sentenced to the Ranch. It's messed up because I'm the last on the list, and I got to wait till around November or December. Then, I'll get out around May or something.

Then when I get out, I'll go on with my life and at least I'll never come here again because I'm 18. Well it was all right in here, but whatever.

**-G-life**

**From The Beat:** Look at in a positive way. There are others who will never see the light of the sun again. There are others who will spend the rest of their lives 23 and half an hour in a room for the rest of their lives. There are others who are resting six feet under and didn't get the chance to enjoy what life really has to offer. You are very young and still have a lot of time to do things you have never imagined in your life. Be smart!

## Different Than Most

Even though we are all the same, we are different. Were different because we think differently. I am different than most because I am educated and I am willing to give a fight and lose my life to the things I believe in.

I'm a gang member and I'm willing to die for it. And I'm not wrong because I once heard that nobody's to judge you because we are right because we have our own reasons.

To others we are wrong, but we are right. Even if others don't agree it doesn't matter because we are individuals and make our own decisions.

**-Lil' R**

**From The Beat:** How many of your dead homies have their images painted as a mural on a wall? What's the purpose of your cause? Be real bro' and stop trying to justify your mistakes. There's no cause in what you do! If you want to be a hero, there are others things you can really fight for, better causes. A good cause would be to help those people who are dying over hunger, who don't get a chance to eat the 5 dollars hamburger we throw in the garbage. It is important to fight for what you believe in, and to stand up for what you believe to be right. But remember, just because you believe in something doesn't mean that it's right. Make sure you evaluate your beliefs before you blindly fight for them.

## Once Upon A Time

Once upon a time in a life full of hate,  
Another twisted mind had a rendezvous with fate.

Had a taste of what his life could of become,  
Never even knowing that his life was almost done.  
At times, it was fun, he was addicted to the game,

He thought that's what he wanted,  
but his mind was framed.

Smoking rocks and never knowing nothing else,  
Never even bothering to stop and ask for help.

Lived for himself to him nobody else mattered,  
Had a girlfriend and her heart.

He had become what he had to do, tried to end it all he  
was burden to this life,

With tears in his eyes, he slowly picked up his knife,  
In his mind it was the only known escape,

In spite of this decision, he felt he had to pray once  
upon a time in a life full of hate,

Another twisted mind threw his life away today.

**-Rascal**

**From The Beat:** Did he make the wrong decision? What happened the ending part of your story? What made you write this? Are you writing about someone you know? If so, do you think this person could have found better way to escape from his problems? What could have been the solution? Do you have one? Have you ever been close to make such a decision when feeling that you had the whole world's problems loaded on your shoulders?

## I'm Not Going to Be A Fool

Q-uvo Beat Within this is Shaggy. The topic for today is a fool or a father, well I'm going to be a father in November, so I've been thinking. A lot of things are going to change and how I feel about it is taking care of my baby and not be a fool.

I have to be there for him. Here lock up ain't doing nothing just my jaina writing to me telling me that the baby moves and that this and that and I'm missing that. I hope everything goes firme and go do what I got to do not be a fool to my family.

I know how it feels not having family together and I don't want that to happen again. Here in jail coming for warrants makes me be a fool but you learn from your mistakes.

**-Shaggy**

**From The Beat:** You deserved a better family life than you got. Every child deserves to feel loved and taken care of with a family that's 'together'. It takes a lot of strength to see that, and to make the decision to be there for your baby no matter what - we respect what you are trying to do. How are you going to balance your old ties with your knew responsibilities?

## I'm Different Than You

It's the Tank once again. I'm different than you because we don't have the same name. We probably have the same thoughts, but you're not me and I'm not you. Your family ain't my family. Your brothers ain't my brothers.

I'm the Tank, and you're your own person. We could be family, but you're not me and I'm not you. I have my own state of mind. I ride for it I'll die for it, just like you would. We ain't the same. Sometimes, I think positive, sometimes I think negative, but I'll always end up on top.

I'm hustling now for the future. I plan on going to college and getting a good job. You're probably planning a whole different thing. I'm still not gonna stop doing what I do 'cause I can't. You're not me and I'm not you, remember that. Much love ...

**-Tank**

**From The Beat:** You're right when you say that we are all different. We all come from different backgrounds, and we all have had to do different things in order to survive under our particular circumstances. But that cannot be used as an excuse. You should look for the best way out, not the easiest, not the quickest. That's right! We may live a better life, and you may not. "You're not us, we are not you."

## My Oldest Jewel

Hey! Every one's favorite gay guy representing this unit! Monique is here and queer. LOL .

Well Beat, today I'm writing about my great-grandpa, our family jewel. He is 93 and dying from cancer. I'm very close to him and I'm writing this between tears. For all I know he's getting worse everyday and could die any day now.

I hope I get the chance to see him and say good-bye before he passes.

He was doing so well four years ago -living on his own, still driving, living in Gilroy. One day he fell and hit his head, ending in a brain aneurism. He's been going downward ever since.

It's hard for me to be writing about this. I miss him dearly already.

Well Beat, I'm going to end this before I can't hold my tears in anymore. I love you great grandpa.!!!

**-Monique**

**From The Beat:** We know you love your great grandpa. He sounds like a great guy and a man who's had a wonderful life. No matter what happens, we know that he knows you love him.

## The Safest Place

What's up Beat, this is your boy Wyno.

Well let me start this off by saying the safest place in my mind is in my neighborhood, 'cause that's where I feel more comfortable and safe.

My homies protect me a lot and I could see who comes in and out of it. That's the place I could go and relax and just kick it with the homeboys at the park. Probably drink a few beers and get back to patrolling and do my business.

This is probably my first and last piece I write, but with that said I'm out stay up and stay safe.

**-Wyno**

**From The Beat:** Would your homies take a bullet for you? Would they give their own life for you? Did you get locked up around your 'hood? How many people have died in your 'hood? Gotten hurt? Then, what makes your neighborhood safe? If it's safe for you, is it safe for all?

## Any Fool Can Have A Kid

Any fool can have a kid. My father wasn't much of a father. He went to prison when I was in third grade and I haven't seen him since.

During that time him and my mom were getting a divorce. So I never really knew my father to call him a fool or a father. To me I never had one.

**-Fatherless**

**From The Beat:** Do you have any memories of him? He must have meant a lot to you before you were eight years old. Are there other people that you looked up to growing up, adult men who could be positive role models?

## It's A Boy!

Topic for today is becoming a dad. On this Monday, I got the results of what my baby's mama going to have, and it's going to be a boy.

This guy is proud and happy like I got to be, but the thing is that I'm locked up. I hope I get to be out by my jaina gives birth and stay out. I'm ready to take care of my new family, get ready to be a parent.

**-Shaggy**

**From The Beat:** Feel happy when you get free and be with your new family. Feel proud when you become a responsible man, giving your kid what he will need in life and when making the right decisions that can give a HOME to this child. Are you sure you are ready? Congratulations!

## Being Honest

I'm not feeling any of these topics. I'm from San Jose I'm 15. I'm going to Ranch and I'm going to do perfect program. I had seven counts, but it's all good, 'cause I'll be out soon to smoke.

I'm going to try my hardest to hit the streets again. I mean I'm not going to lie, but I'm probably going to keep doing the same things I did last time, but do it smarter.

I'm not going to lie. All the people in here are stupid for being in here, because they got caught I mean like, it sucks to see homeboys in here and not out smoking a blunt or just chilling, but that's life.

**-Orlando**

**From The Beat:** If you are able to be so honest about what you intend to do once you get out, why are you unable to be honest about the consequences of doing what you did before you got caught? Do you really think that, even if you are smart about it, even if you don't lie, you will be able to avoid getting caught? Yes, you might, but the chances are very slim. Why put yourself through that again? We don't see a purpose of doing well in your program (Ranch) to come back again. It might take you six or more months to finish this program, and loose it all in one day, an hour, or in a minute. If we were you, we would think about it over and over again.



## My Lady's Place

The safest place for me is my fiancé's house. Her mom is so welcoming. She likes to make you feel at home. My fiancé's house is like the best because she has everything that I want and need.

She likes my house better, because my house has more privacy. My room is the best though. My fiancé's is the best because she always comes out of nowhere and she surprises me.

Every time I go to her because, she always feeds me hella shhh. She got me into finding a job. But anyways, her house is the best because there are many snacks that you can eat. Her house is also safe and funny. The best part of being in her house is that she always makes me happy ad smile.

That is why I think her house is the safest for me. My house is not better because everyone is always coming to my house, because they always know I'm always home.

**-The Man**

**From The Beat:** If we had a girlfriend like yours, we wouldn't be here. We suggest you to stay more with your girl. It seems like she wants the best for you. Sometimes we don't know what we have until we loose it. Don't let this happen to you.

## Mad and Taking A Risk

Risk. Everyone takes risks in life -- some are little, some are big. Some are good, some are bad. Well a risk I took made me fail EMP. One day after school I had detention and I was already mad 'cause I couldn't leave with my lady, so I went to detention and someone was mugging me.

I could have just chilled and didn't trip, but I got up and told him "if you look at me again, I'm going to smash." Well to make a long story short I smashed and I took the risk of failing EMP

**-BayBoy**

**From The Beat:** Is that how you ended up back in here? We're sorry that happened - would you say that anger gets you in trouble a lot?

## Biggest Risk: A Break-in

The biggest risk I've taken is when I broke into someone's house with my .45.

My homeboy and I broke into a house and ended up stealing their jaguar. I was going as fast as I could and I was playing bumper cars with hella cars.

I've stolen only a couple of cars and every time I end up barely escaping the police.

**-Big Bubba**

**From The Beat:** It sounds like your days are full of risk. Do you think you will continue taking these risks when you are released, or do you think you'll "calm it down" once you get out. We hope you do, because you could get hurt or catch a serious case, and that's not worth the gamble!

## My Risk

What's crackin' Beat, this is Wyno. Well I'm going to start this piece by saying that I always like taking risk because if you don't take risks then you're always gonna want to do things you never tried.

The first risk I took was to gang bang and I loved it cause everything I do now is all a risk. Like doin' licks, jackin' foo's is what I like to do.

**-Wyno**

**From The Beat:** Do you like being locked up? Do you like having to run from cops? Do you like going to funerals? Do you like the feeling of having to look over your shoulder all the time? Are those risks worth it

## Risking Life and Freedom

It's from "Frank The Tank" once again just chillin'. I think most gang members risk their life and their freedom. You can be walking down the street and see a rival and smash on him and get backed up or the rival can just pull out a gun or knife and your life can be over.

That's what I think. Well time for The Beat is up..

**-Frank the Tank**

**From The Beat:** Is that risk worth it, in your opinion? Do you think that if people knew what they were risking when they first had the chance to get caught up, if they really understood the stakes, that they would still do it?

## What I Think About

What's up Beat? Well today I'm going to write about what makes me different. What makes me different is the way I think about things.

When I'm locked up, all I think about is my education and getting out. Everyone else in here are just thinking about getting out and doing something to come back for even longer while I'm thinking about getting out and getting my high school diploma, so I can go to college and have a better life.

I want to have a better life so when I have kids I can give them what I didn't have.

**-Donkey**

**From The Beat:** Don't worry about what others are thinking of doing. Live your life! Worry about your own life and future. You're right on track. Don't let go of these positive thoughts because they're the only motivation you have and will need to succeed in life.

## No Safest Place

What up Beat! This your boy Lil' Buddah coming from this unit now. But anyway I'm writing about the safest place.

To be real there is no safe place nowadays. You can't go anywhere living the life I live without getting popped by the cops, giving us a hard time for no reason.

It's messed up that I can't walk the block without somebody trying to flex up on you, but it's cool because this the life I chose, and the life I'm gonna live.

Well that's what I got to say till next time I'm up and tru late.

**-Lil' Buddah**

**From The Beat:** Exactly! There will never be a safe place for you while living the way you are living! There will always be people hating you, judging you, and trying to hurt you. But it seems like you don't care about it. Do you? You still have another option of living a peaceful and happier life. You know this!

## Safest Place

Q'vole Beat! Today's subject is a safe place, my homeboy Playboy's pad. Every time I would get mad at my parents, I would just go to his house. He only lived blocks away. It didn't matter, I could go to his house at anytime of the day or night.

His mom would make me breakfast, lunch, dinner. She was like my step-mom. She would take care of me. If I was drunk or high, I could just go there.

When Playboy got sent to Y-A, I just couldn't stand being at his pad when he wasn't there. So now I don't have a safe place anymore. I miss my boy.

**-Negro**

**From The Beat:** It's cool to have a place like this. It's a shame that both of you are in the same situation, kinda sorta. What's wrong with your house? If you have problems with your parents, why don't you try solving it? And not running away from your problems.

## A Good Father

When I have a child, I'm going to be a father, because I want to be there for him/her when he/she needs me how my father was there for me.

My father has been with me through good and bad, from bringing me into this world, and through my incarceration. My father is still with me, and supporting me. He comes with my mother everyday to visit me, and to show they have infinite love for me. So I want to do the same for my baby.

**-Thinking Ahead**

**From The Beat:** Do you know how many young people in here don't have what you have, excellent parents. If we were you, we would be doing our best to show them how much you appreciate their effort and love given. We hope this experience teaches you what you need to learn to become a father and a man like yours.

## The Street Keep Calling

The street keeps calling my name  
as I'm looking for fortune and fame

These San Jose streets gave me my name  
so once the cops come, people point at me  
like I'm the one to blame.

So I give chase 'cause I don't want to catch a case, sweat  
and blood dripping from my face  
'cause I'm fighting my way out of this place.

**-Taz**

**From The Beat:** People judge you because of what you do, who you hang with, and the way you act. If you don't like the way they think about you, do something about it. Be careful with the streets, it can take a lot of things from you including your life the same way it gave you your nickname.

## To The Beat

Dear Beat, why is it that you guys are always punks when you guys write us responses to our piece?

And another question I got is, why in the hell haven't ya'll put none of my drawings in The Beat? I done drew a couple of good drawings too! So can you answer that for me? And my drawings were better than most others or nothing but yea. So I expect to have all my questions answered and please don't be punks when you reply to this piece or if a girl response.

**-Barak Obama**

**From The Beat:** Do you still expect a response to your question? Check yourself first! Check the way you express yourself, the words you use, and tones. We do our best to print the drawings, and give everybody a fair shake in our weekly. And if you don't see it, the reason maybe is that it didn't qualify to be published into our publication. Try again, or are you afraid?

## Being Present

A father is when you are when your baby is born and be with him until he grows up.

Lots of people have been growing up without a father and they have succeed in life, but most of the people specifically teenager when they don't have a father they get upset of life and they start doing crazy shhh.

For example me I have a father, but I don't have that father that I want to have and that's what let me to hang out with the wrong guys. So that's why it is important to be with your son/daughter so they could have a better example to follow.

**-Elvis**

**From The Beat:** Are you speaking from experience? Can you be one of those guys who will succeed without the support of a father? It's possible. You even said it. Are you going to be like your father or one of those who will always be there for their kids?

## Risk

I think a big risk is being your problems to your family, such as gang banging or drugs, and weapons. I think that stuffs should not bring around your love ones.

**-Trillo**

**From The Beat:** If this is what you think, why do you do it? Why do you put them in that situation?

## My Father Owes

Although I have met my father, he has yet to take any responsibility for my sister and I. He currently owes 135,000 dollars to child support.

That being said, I still don't hate him and would hope to one day have a solid relationship with him. There's one good thing he did. He taught me that when I have a child that I need to assume full responsibility for them.

**-Thanks Dad!**

**From The Beat:** How did he teach this if he wasn't a responsible man? We so know the type of father you will be too. We wish you the best with your life.

## It Was A Risky Moment

What's up Beat? Well today's topic is about taking risks. I am going to tell you a day I took a risk, and almost ended getting stabbed.

It all started one morning when me and my carnal were walking to the store, we were both repping, and out of nowhere these fools come out of a car saying hella shhh. So we had to put the smash on them right in the middle of the street, and this one fool pulls out a kitchen knife and swang it like crazy. My carnal was aware and found a pole nearby, so he cracked him in the dome and he fell.

When they left and we left. I look at my shirt and it had some cuts in it and I had cuts in my stomach. So if my brother hadn't cracked him, I would of gotten stabbed, or probably even ended up dead. Well that's my story.

To all stay up, be safe, I hope we all get out soon.

**-Chicano**

**From The Beat:** Damn, you almost got hurt, yet you brought way too much attention to yourself, by repping. Lucky you and your homies didn't get hurt. You're right, if he hadn't picked that up, you wouldn't be here. Can you see how close you were to lose it all? You will always be in high risk when being in wrong places, and with the wrong people. Take this as a wake up call and learn from this. You were too close. Think about how would the next one be.

## My Oldest Sister

My oldest sister is 23. My older sister is very important to me. She has taught me a lot and has helped me through hard times.

My oldest sister is very important to me. I look up to her a lot. She has been helping me get through my time I've been locked up. She is writing a lot, so I have something to look forward to getting. My oldest sister has set a very good example for me. She works very hard and she's graduating from college this year.

My older sister is always there for me, when I need her advice or need someone to talk to. She is very understanding and helps me through any problems I have.

**-DJ Stylez**

**From The Beat:** You have such an exemplar sister in your life. If you had listened to the advices she gave you, your life could have been a totally different one. If we were you, we would do whatever was in our hand to make her feel that her efforts really count. Make her feel proud by graduating from college too. She loves you so much and we are sure that you love her as well. Just show your love!

## My Cupcake

I miss you a lot. Sorry for rushing you. Sorry for not being that man you been looking for. I tried. I do love you. You're that pearl. But whoever you end up with is lucky. And I hope he treats you right.

You probably won't even remember me once I get out. But hopefully we're still going to be friends. Cupcake, how I miss that.

I'm going crazy in here. But it's time to say bye. Good things don't last forever baby. "I shouldn't be concerned, I get what I deserve, now she's messing with a sucka.

Well at least that's what I heard. She be thinking about him, while I'm thinking about her. When I tell her I like her, I mean every single word. Relationship are absurd, and break ups even worst, but this is life so I feel like it's right to be divorce." You'll always have someone to lean on, no strings attached.

I'm different from others. And you know that. I'll prove it to you. Just remember realized the real lies with your real eyes ma...

**-Mouthpiece B**

*From The Beat: Sorry you lost someone you really like. This is how life is. It could have been different though, but you didn't think about it when you had to. Someday, you'll find another person, and we hope this experience help you keep her with you forever. Prove it to yourself first! You need it.*

## Grandpa

The oldest in your family is my grandpa' and he means a lot to me because he was a hard worker and a very nice person.

I wish I could be like him because he was a soldier. He fought his own battles and he made a very hard life. He raised twelve kids and they wore nice clothes and always had something to eat. He always worked. That's why I want to be like him, because he is a man of his word and strong.

**-A grandson**

*From The Beat: We hope you become like him one day. In order to do that, you would have to turn your life upside down, in a good way. Are you willing to do that? Maybe someday your future grandchildren can write about you like you are writing about him. It sounds lovely! Doesn't it?*

## Always Kickin' It, Always Risking

What up Beat? Well I'm gonna talk about my life on risk. I'm always kickin' it with the homeboys representing what I'm about. I'm always smashing on the enemy. And always walking down the hood watching my back because you'll never be alone. I'm always on my toes ready to ride riskin' my life to this life.

**-Gilroy Boy**

*From The Beat: This piece is sad because we wonder if you really think on what you are risking - your mothers' tears, the loneliness of a long jail sentence, being crippled in a wheelchair and separated from your girl. And for what? Is it worth it?*

## My Oldest Brother

I look up to him 'cause he has a kid. He looks after him to make sure nothing happens to him. I also have a kid, but I made some bad decision that got me here.

When I get out, I'm gonna stop with this nonsense and be responsible for my kid. The reason I look up to him is 'cause he knows how to take care of his son.

**-Brother**

*From The Beat: Learn from him! Be like him. You can make it to be a better father. Don't fail him. It's time.*

## The Beat Within

Hey what's cracking Beat? It's your boy Frankie dropping a couple lines for the last time from the juvenile hall.

I'm not feeling the topics too much today just because this could probably be my last entry for The Beat Within.

Sometime next week, I'll be leaving to county jail to fight and hopefully win my case.

Anyways though I just wanna talk about something that I've been reading in The Beat lately that have been getting on my nerves. It's the people in here crying about getting a six to eight month sentence at the Ranch or even the hall time.

What I really want to tell all those people is to look at the other people getting life sentences and don't have a release date to look forward to. They would love to have that 6 to 8 month program, but can't get it and you don't hear them whining.

But yeah that's just really been bugging me. Can't say too much more because I'm running out of time, but to those that know me, keep your heads up and to those who hate me mwah! Laters Beat.

**-Frankie**

*From The Beat: That's right! Unfortunately some of you may be stuck in the system for a long time, when others won't. We hope this message open their eyes and make them see what's more important in life. It was too bad that you realize this too late. But, don't give up. There are always hopes in life that motive people to move in life. It was a pleasure to have you part of our publications. Your words and wise writing always leave us some knowledge and things to think about. We hope you make it out soon. Do your best in getting out. Whatever sentence you get, do your best to reduce it. Leave this place with a positive purpose and use your time for your convenience and to fix your life.*

## A Fool and A Father at the Same Time

Well I'm a fool and father at the same time. My son is about to turn two in August. And I'm the fool that's behind these steel doors. Damn I messed up this time.

But I'll be out with son soon, and I just gotta do my program at the ranch this time. Because the last two times I ran from the ranch.

That's why I'm a father and a fool at the same time.

**-Boi**

*From The Beat: A fool is only a fool if he refuses to learn. It sounds like you have learned from past experience, and now know what you need to do, so you can be with your son!*

## Anarchy Burger Hold The Government

Attack!

Truck slap.

Kill a cat

hit your neighbor with a bat.

America stands for freedom and if you think your free

try ordering an anarchy burger

hold the government please!

Political greed corporate greed.

It's all the same to me

people die everyday

people's life gets taken away

but there's no price to pay

'cause Bush has his money

one trillion dollars spent buying bullets buying guns

whatever happened to all the school funds

war sucks

lets party

bomb Iraq because its funny.

**-Born 2 Skate**

*From The Beat: Hmm, we suppose all off the top of the head. Try to teach us something next time with your skills as a poet.*



## A High Speed Chase

I think the biggest risk I've taken is when I took Gilroy Police Department on a high-speed chase. Even talking and writing about it is a risk. Many people might think it's nothing big, but once you're in the action it's a whole different story.

Push it to the limit is all we were thinking, got hit off the road twice, but just I started the car and kept it going. Next thing I know, the car runs out of gas and I'm on my way back here with my same co-partner that was involved in my first and second auto-theft.

So we know we're gonna get wrapped up this time. Well that's about it. Until next time I'm out...

**-Young G**

**From The Beat:** Of course it's very risky not just to you but to innocents who are walking along crosswalks or driving. You can even end up your own life. This is something serious. Do you regret doing this? We hope you use this time to think about what you did and how drastic it could have been to you and others if you had hit another one. If you had killed someone on the road, it could have counted as a murder charge.

## A Risk

Taking a risk whatever you do out in the streets in the 'hoods. Is a risk of you being locked up, but you want to take that risk to have more respect.

But whatever you do, you gotta be smart about it. If not, you're going to end up in the hall chilling in max.

Everything is a risk, but you want to take it to see if you can get away with it. What is also a risk is when you're not in the outs. It's a risk of not see what you be seeing for a long time.

**-Risky Thoughts**

**From The Beat:** So you were not smart, and that's the reason you are here and keep coming back? Why is it a risk not seeing what's happening on the outs? If you clarify this question to us, your point would be understood.

## I've Started To Think A Lot

Q-vole Beat. Well, I ain't feeling these topics so I'm going to write about something else. Well Beat I've been in Juvenile Hall for about 3 months and a half. I'm headed to the ranch.

Well all this time I've been here I started to think about a lot. I've learned a lot of things from staff that have crossed my way since I've been here, so a lot of the tings they tell me are getting through my head.

I'm starting to see things different so when I get out I'm going to change a lot of things about myself. Well all you haters that say nice guys finish last you're wrong well, alrato.

**-Solo**

**From The Beat:** We hope you do make those changes. And it's not true, "nice guys" or in your case, legit guys, don't finish last, instead they finish High School. They finish College, They finish getting married, getting a house, getting respect for who they've become! Peace!

## I'm Pissed

What's up Beat! Well today I'm writin' about my punk ass dad. See that fool ran on me my sister and my mom and he thinks he's a man that but he ain't!

But anyways I don't feel like writing because I'm pissed because I'm in a unit with a bunch of kids that can't act right. They mess up program for everyone and now were on some lame program so I'm out late.

**-G-Life**

**From The Beat:** Sometimes writing isn't about hitting the topic but just blowing off steam when you're having a bad day - we hope that writing out how mad you were made it a little easier to get through your unit's program, and that it ended quickly.

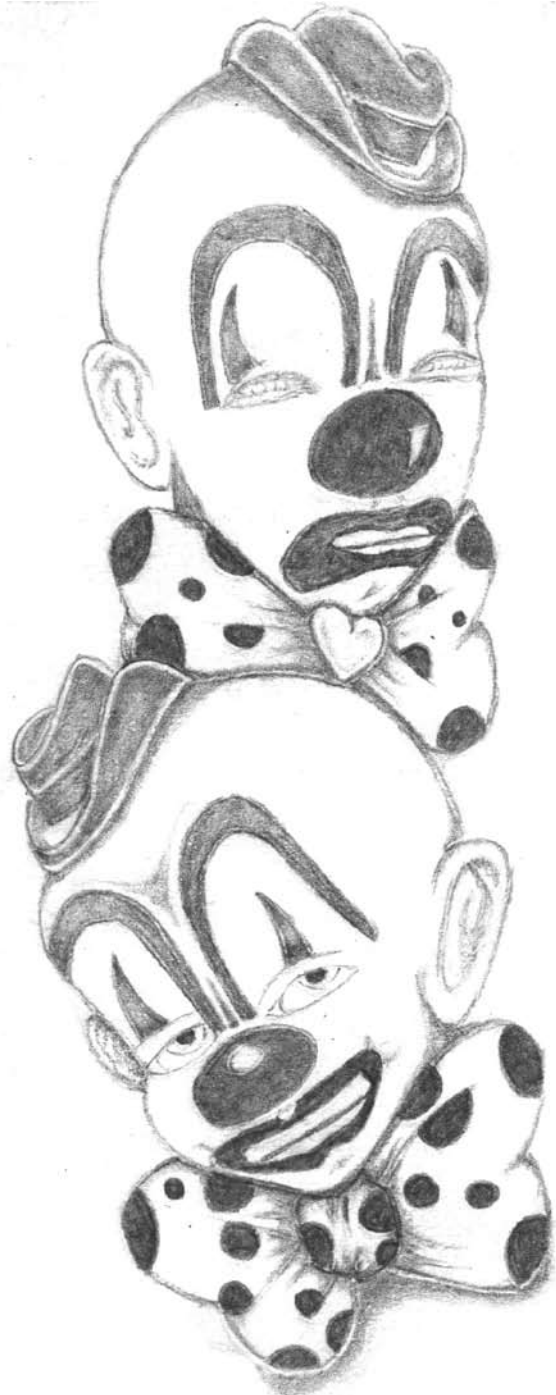
## My Great Grandmother

My great grandmother is the family jewel, 'cause without her we would be broke! She had 12 kids include my grandma (her daughter) and my aunts and uncles (her kids as well).

She's the oldest generation in my family, and without her everyone wouldn't know what it do. She talks to everyone and knows all the gossip of the family so if you want to know what's up, call her she'll tell you the scoop.

**-Husalah**

**From The Beat:** Your great-grandmother sounds like an incredible woman! How old is she? Does she ever talk to you about what her life was like when she was your age? Does she ever give you advice about how to get out of the system? Do you follow it?



## Like Confucius

I'm a savage like Confucius  
so don't confuse this.

It wouldn't amaze me if you overthrew us.

We're strong, like the Moas,  
and lasted as long as the dynasty.

You would never know how  
from our struggles down the Nile.

I'll have you sippin off my vile.

Long live my lifestyle -

living wild 'cause that's the mentality of my survival.

Hunting and slaying like the Spartans.

Oh we're strong

but I can never be slipped.

Like a disease, my crew's gonna live at the top.

**-Baby Drifter**

**From The Beat:** Hey, this doesn't sound like Confucius to us. He was a very smart fellow and he wouldn't approve of this kind of bragging. He would have said something like - "Let's think this thing through. How can we adjust our behavior so that everyone comes out on top, so that everyone gets what they need, and that everyone also has a fair shot at getting what they desire." He'd have said it better, but you get the drift.... right.

## How Many Times

How many times must I break the laws,  
be far from home,

standing on the street corner, high,  
taggin' on walls

with chrome on my side -  
doin' anything to survive?

**-Oscar**

**From The Beat:** Even once is more than enough. Once is too much, in fact. This is a powerful poem, Oscar, very powerful. Telling the truth, asking the right questions, opening up your heart, your mind - this is what poetry is all about.

## Why

Why do we have to always celebrate American  
holidays?

Why can't we celebrate Mexican holidays?

Why can't Cinco De Mayo be a national holiday, but July  
4th can?

Why can't we educate ourselves  
about Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata, Cesar Chavez in  
history class?

We study Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln.

I'd rather be in a poverty country than a corrupted  
America.

**-Andrew**

**From The Beat:** It sounds like you are educating yourself about those guys. True education doesn't stop at borders. Real education breaks down borders. Have you asked your teachers to make room in the curriculum to study the historical figures you've mentioned? And don't forget the library. Here's an assignment: look up the word - autodidact.

## My Days

Some days are sunny.

Some days are funny.

My days are cloudy.

Staff is always pouty.

My days are rainy.

They are plain, you see.

**-Lil' L**

**From The Beat:** We see that you have the potential to turn most of your days sunny. Keep writing and learning. Leave the pouting to those who would pout. You have more important work to do. So cut everybody some slack, be respectful, and take advantage of your down time to read, read, read.... and write.

## The Coach's Award

My proudest accomplishment is when I made my dad  
cry because I won a basketball tournament and got the  
coach's award. My dad had tears of joy.

**-Gilbert**

**From The Beat:** Good going! Keep that vision in your mind and heart to help you stay on the right track - so you can see more of your Dad's joy.

## My Many Accomplishments

I've had many accomplishments, but my proudest  
accomplishment must have been when I was about 8 and I  
went to the beach and there was a competition. Everybody  
was in wetsuits, except for me. My mom wanted me to  
compete, so I said 'yes'.

I competed in my age group - kids from 8 to 10. There  
were about 15 of us and it was called the Cold Water Classics.  
I got first in the body surfing competition. I won a surf board,  
stickers, and \$200. A week later I was in the newspaper, on  
the front page of The Santa Cruz Sentinel.

**-Josh**

**From The Beat:** Congratulations. We hope your mom kept a copy of that issue of the paper. Why not begin to think about your next major accomplishment. It's likely to be connected to something you already feel strongly about. It doesn't have to be a sport. Maybe it involves an area of study that fascinates you. What's your favorite subject in school. Ever wonder how far your intellectual curiosity might take you? Get busy.

## Big

Well, I'm back. This time my case is big. They've been  
trying to get me for a long time but I will stay up. It's cool. I  
got whipped and have taken stuff. I say every day, "God help  
me, God help me" to the family in Oakland and Sacramento,  
stay up.

Well, this is Zach, they make me write more than I want,  
but it's cool. I stay high at the top of my game. Save me for  
the end. You feel me... the end.

**-Zach**

**From the Beat-** You're right, Zach, this time your case is bigger. Each time you come back to the hall, it's a bigger deal. Stay on this track and eventually you will have gone too far. You'll loose your freedom for a very long time. Do you really want that? Other people can help you, but only if you do your part.

## Graduation

My proudest accomplishment is when I graduated from  
the Evening Center. I felt proud because I had to do thirty  
days without getting in trouble and that was hard for me.  
They gave me a certificate saying not to get into trouble.

**-Don't Call Me Troublemaker**

**From The Beat:** That is an accomplishment and one to be proud of. We're proud of you too. Breaking bad habits is a difficult thing. Your experience in the Evening Center proved that you can do it. Remember that in times to come and you will have many more great accomplishments.

## Free Write

I'm gonna write about what I think happens when you die.  
Some people say you go to heaven, or hell. I think when you  
die you either get buried or burned. I don't think we really  
go anywhere but in the dirt, or in a vase. Personally, when I  
die - I want to get creamated - so I don't go in the dirt with all  
the worms, or those other bugs. That's what I think happens  
when you die.

**-G**

**From The Beat:** We don't know what happens after death. We know that many people feel more comfortable believing that there is an afterlife. Some folks are so sure of one that they seem not to care too much about what happens in this life. If you're convinced that this life is it, it makes the stakes a lot higher. If this is it, then we'd better get as much right as we can. It seems to us that one measurement of a good life involves being of service to others. Caring just about ourselves is probably not the best way to find happiness. What do you think?

## My Missed/Missing Father

The reason I don't think my father took his responsibility is because he wasn't there for me. I love him, but I think that he could have been there for me. He could have been there for my birthday.

Last time I saw my father was the fourth of July of 2003.

I think that he will be at least there for me when I go back to bootcamp. When I get out I hope to see him.

The moral is that you shouldn't take advantage of your family: your mom or your father. Don't take advantage; just be grateful.

**-Gabriel**

**From The Beat:** We realize that your father not "being there" for you, especially on your birthday, was difficult and painful for you to acknowledge, but we salute your courage for being able to write about it. Feelings from the heart are sometimes conflicting - we still love someone even when they hurt us. Sometimes the best we can do is to realize that "they" did the best they knew how or were able to do at the time, and for us to carry their love with us always, whether we get to see them or not. You are right: We should not take advantage of each other. We at The Beat are glad you are looking forward to the day when you get out. We wish you success and the ability to get on with your life.

## Mexico, Here I Come

My Abuela Rosa is in Mexico. She is the oldest in my family. When I get out of here I am going to visit her. I'm gonna go help her out, whatever she needs. Right now she has a broken hand. I'm gonna help her out for whatever she needs.

It's hard to pay bills over there. That's why we send money from here over there. My uncle and my mom try to help her out. I have uncles over there.

I had my favorite uncle, but he left and can't come back. He would take me out to go eat pizza and play video games.

This is not the life to be living: sleeping in a hard bed. Cold. Food is no good. I'm doing it here - going to bootcamp - and going to Mexico. I ain't gonna come back.

**-Elizandro**

**From The Beat:** Yes, you are correct: sleeping on a hard bed in a cold place that serves bad food is not living the life that was intended for us. But everything else you wrote is so positive! Your family helps each other; what a blessing! And you have a giving heart also. Bravo! When you finish "here" and finish bootcamp and go to Mexico, we hope you and your favorite uncle can enjoy some Mexican-style pizza and play video games together again. As far as never coming back, well, you know about never saying "never"; don't you? We wish you success at achieving your plans.

## LIKE A BROTHER, Big O

I know one cool staff in juvenile hall named "Big O. He's a person who you'd like to call a big brother. He keeps me up with jobs, such as breakfast, lunch, dinner whenever he's here, and night clean-up. Sometimes we have our ups and downs, such as I asked for a laundry job and he always picks somebody else. But I still stand on my toes. But I can't argue 'cause I sometimes piss him off by aggravating him a lot. But he always be my main homie. I always ask him for advice whenever I need it—about school, keepin' my Stage 3 or what to write for The Beat.

But (don't worry) I chose this topic on my own. If it wasn't for Big O, Nina and Lloyd, this pod wouldn't be the way it is without them. And that means the best. That is my story of Big Owens.

**-Mitchell**

**From The Beat:** Mitchell we recognize that you have a good understanding of the foundation of positive relationships. We encourage you to continue to seek support with positive role models such as Big Owens. Nice writing!

## What do I see

I stare in the mirror and what do I see?

I see a smiling young woman who's a goddess to be Beautiful smile, luscious lips and banging curves to every extent

but what lies behind everyone's vision is a lonely child asking for forgiveness so when I look in this mirror I can finally see the only one I need to forgive is me.

**- Dejanae**

**From The Beat:** It takes courage to look at our selves. We admire your courage. You are a very good person. We hope you find a way to forgive yourself.

## What is life?

One thing I know, life is not jacking people and stealing from the store.

Life is too short to go around taking it for granted.

Most people get their life taken away by the age of 18.

**- Ashonique**

**From The Beat:** We are glad you are looking at your life and making positive changes.

## Daddy's Coming Home

Today I want to start this letter by saying, "What's up, Beat Within?" I want to start this story by saying that I can't believe I am in here again!

I had made a promise to my mom and my baby's mamma! Eventually I had broken my promise so my baby's mamma left me all alone with my kid!

I am about to turn 17 and I first had my own kid at the age of 15, so my son is one year old. His birthday just passed yesterday, so that really sucked because I was in here for it.

I hope that I get out pretty soon so I can go back to taking care of him. I am a responsible parent.

Well, I love all who love me. My message to all who are reading my passage is: Life is a beautiful thing just to waste on being locked up, and just to be nobody ain't the business!

**-Calwa**

**From The Beat:** Yes, you are young to be a parent, but we praise you for wanting to be a good father. We hope that not too many more of your son's birthdays pass by before you can be together again. We also hope that you have a wise "father figure" to learn from when you get out so that you can be the best dad possible for your son. It's good that you understand life's beauty. Maybe this time when you are released it will be your love of life, the growth you have made from being in the hall, and your love for your little boy that will make the difference for being successful and staying out of "here" for good. Just like being a father, anybody can be a nobody; it takes hard work deserving of respect to be a somebody and a daddy. We know you can do it! Your son is counting on it.

## Much Love To Y'all

My dad was never there for me. Sometimes I wish that bastard was there. I know he does care but shhh at least, you know, come by and see how I'm doing.

I thank God that they put my step-dad in my mom's life. He's wonderful.

In fact, I got three daddy's now but I love them the same. Well BEAT, I'm out. To those that don't have your Dad in your life, keep your head up.

**-Kallett**

**From The Beat:** We thank you for sharing your experience and your upbeat attitude. Good luck and find a way to be grateful, no matter what. Maybe in your next piece you can tell us about your step-dad!



## The Family Jewel

The oldest person in my family is my great-grandmother. She is 78 years old and is a nice lady. My grandma means the world to me. If she was gone I wouldn't know what to do. I learned that my family is the most important thing in the world and that we should always be there for our family, through thick and thin.

Family is always going to be there for us. The role my grandmother plays is that everyone loves her and on the weekend, the grandkids go stay with her and spend time with her and spend time with her because we all love her and want to spend time with her before she's gone.

- Kristina

**From The Beat:** Thanks for sharing this personal memory with The Beat! You have plenty to be grateful for. We hope you can do the things you need to so you can return to your family.

## The Fast Lanes

A fast mind leads to fast situations

A fast body leads to fast boys

A fast sexuality leads to fast reputations

A fast reputation leads to fast propositions

And fast propositions lead your fast behind down empty, one-way, dead-end streets with nowhere to go.

So, if I could do it all over again  
knowing what I know now

I would choose to drive slowly and  
obey the speeding laws.

-Slow lane

**From The Beat:** If you were in the same situation tomorrow, would you do the same regrettable things? Or did you learn a lesson that will help you next time? We think the latter.



## Dedicated to my son, Romeo

I remember the first time.

Your face changed my life

Like sunlight your eyes shined

I can't believe they took you

I know it will never be the same.

Without my baby boy I can't maintain.

I was too young and dumb to change  
and now it's too late to see you again.

I'm sorry baby boy.

-Young Mom

**From The Beat:** Thank you for sharing this. We realize that it is very hard and sad to separate a mother from her son. We hope you are able to reconnect in your relationship.

## Biggest Risk

I think that the biggest risk would be for me to lose my life which I have almost done a few times, in a few different times.

Like the time that I remember the most was when me and a few other people were just chillin. And we were blowing when this van was just about to roll by, but they saw us and they turn down the street.

I remember someone coming out the window, then I started running. But the part I remember the most is as soon I ran in the gate, a bullet hit the gate but at that moment I was not thinking that who ever was shooting was shooting at me. But that is just another day in the hood.

-Rb

**From The Beat:** Rb, your life is a special gift and it matters in the world. We hope you can decide that it is not worth risking this way and that you can risk trying a different path to success.

*...the part I remember the most is as soon I ran in the gate, a bullet hit the gate but at that moment I was not thinking that who ever was shooting was shooting at me.*

## He's not the fool

My father is not a fool because he was always there for me.

He never left me alone in life.

My father was there in the good and bad.  
He worked hard to get his own business and he is proud of himself.

This year, I let my father down a lot.

I disappointed him by getting pregnant and leaving home to go to JH.

I disappointed my father because I was the oldest and he wanted the best in life for me. He wanted me to have babies when I get married but I didn't.

I regret doing what I wanted and learned my lesson I learned it the hard way so that makes me the fool.

-Briceyda

**From The Beat:** We thank you for sharing your experience. Your father sounds like he loves you very much. We believe you can learn from your experience. Forgive yourself and find your constructive dream to live by just like your father.

## Faith

If I shall fall from faith, my life would be hell.

"He" is the one to comfort me, the one who's there for me.

Without Him I am lonely, sad, embarrassed.

He makes me strong; He makes me brave.

I love Him with all my heart.

If I fell from faith, my soul would burn.

-Luke

**From The Beat:** What a beautiful poem! How wonderful that you have a Higher Power to look to and who looks after you and who loves you right back. Please check with your source because you might find that "He" who is all knowing and forever loving is also always forgiving even though we are all who we are (human - and remember we were all made in His image) and even though we all do what we do (make mistakes). You also might want to check the meaning of "grace." Always strive to be the best person you can be, but have you heard that all it takes is just to "Ask and 'we' shall be forgiven"? We can't wait to read your next poem!



## My Big Brother

My brother is the oldest in our family. My brother is 21 years old and he has a job. He takes me to school and he take cares of me.

When he goes to work he doesn't know what I am doing so I go and play with my friends.

When my brother come home I come home so he won't get mad at me. I always come home at 8:00 p.m. so I won't be home so late.

If I come home late I don't get to go play the next day. My big brother takes care of me and the family. I learned from my brother not to do bad things but I didn't listen to him I started to do bad things. Today I think about it, and what my brother told me.

**-Khue**

**From The Beat:** You have been doing some logical thinking and perhaps you got off track temporarily but with the help of your brother we are pretty sure you can accomplish anything you set your mind on.

## The Good Father

A good father is someone who is there for their kid to take care of them. He buys them clothes and food. He spends time with them like reading them a book or playing sports they like. It doesn't matter if you are married or not.

What matters is if you take care of the kids or not. A bad Father abuses their kid when they're drunk or the father ignores the kid and calls him "stupid" when the kid wants to spend time with their father.

Some people, their dad beats them up for dumb reasons and that's not what a good father does.

One day, I would like to have at least four kids and I want to be a good father.

**-Kevin**

**From The Beat:** You are right, Kevin, in order be a good dad it means spending time with them from birth to adulthood, helping and teaching them to make the right choices. We believe you will make a good father one day. Please remember to make the right choices to reach your goal.

## I will never fall in love again

I once fell in love with a wonderful man.  
He told me I was his everything in his life.

He never told me he hated me.

I wish everything was different but it was always be the same.

I once fell in love and I thought it would work but I was wrong.

He knew he could use and take advantage of me.

I once fell in love with a gang-member. He was my everything.

I was a little girl, a young teen.

Now he's locked up and he doesn't care.

I thought he really loved me but I was wrong.

All I can say is I will never fall in love again.

All he ever did was hurt and use me.

**- Candy**

**From The Beat:** Thank you for sharing your experience. We realize how much pain and grief there is after a relationship ends. Please look after yourself. We wish you the best.

## Risk

The biggest risk I've taken was ditching school. It isn't really a biggest risk, but to me it is. I usually go to school, but one day I decided to ditch with some friends. I choose to go with them for the first time.

I would be in big trouble if I was caught. It was really a bad choice. I regret doing it all, but it was a good experience. It made me into a better person. Not to ditch no more and all. It meant a lot and all.

The second biggest risk was not doing my homework. I decided to not do my home work one day, because I was too tired. The teacher gave me an "F". I learned from it quickly, and will never do it again.

**-Schoolboyee**

**From The Beat:** We all make mistakes, but when we learn from them, we can change our lives and paths. We can see that you've learned it's important to choose friends who help you make smart choices and get your education. Keep thinking this way!



## Pedir Disculpas

Le he pedido disculpa a mi madre y perdón solo a Dios por todo lo malo que he hecho en este momento. A veces alguien me pide disculpa por algo que me ha hecho.

La vida la cambiara en la manera de seguir a Dios. Si un amigo a perdido la vida por andar haciendo lo malo en este mundo, hay que hacer lo bueno. Eso pienso yo.

Me hace sentir bien hablar con mi novia, darle un regalo el día de su cumpleaños o hablar con mi madre aunque está muy lejos. Cuando tengo un problema hablo con ella.

**From The Beat:** Pedir perdón es un buen gesto, siempre y cuando lo hagas de corazón. Trata de pasar más tiempo con las personas que más te quieren.

## Asking For Forgiveness

I've only asked my mom and God for forgiveness for all the wrong things I've done to them at these moment. Sometimes, people ask me for forgiveness for something they've done.

You will change your life when you start following God. If a friend had lost his/her life when doing wrong in his world, we have to do things right. That's what I think.

It makes me feel happy when give my girl a gift in her birthday, or when I talk to my mother who is very far. When I have a problem, I talk to her.

**-Ariel, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** To ask for forgiveness is a nice thing to do always and when you really mean it from the heart. Try to spend more time with those who love you.

## My Freedom

Mi libertad (freedom has turned en un sueño (into a dream)

Y mi alma y corazón ya no tiene dueño

Mi vida (And my soul doesn't have a owner, My life) had turn in hell

Pero mi corazón y mi alma (But my heart and soul) are locked up in a cell

Mi amor (my love) had turn hate

Y mi corazón es de piedra fría donde

Encajaron (And my heart is made of cold stone where was set on) a blade

Mi cell está oscura y fría (dark and cold) done I got no soul

Donde (Where) I got no pain

Donde I get no dream

Mi mente dice (my mind say) hell no, there's not way I'm

Gonna be in prisión (prison) for years

Pero mi corazón entiende y dice (but, my heart understand and say) deal with it

And shhh mess up

There's no past, there's no future you're in the present

There only thing is survival

Final del día y ser un hombre

That's the code de un gerrero

Mis noches se hacen una tormenta

Si no estas aqui y siento que estoy muerto en vida a cada que me duermo.

(of a warrior

my nights make a storm

and if you're not here, I feel I am dead in life

every time I sleep.

**-Edgar, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** Just work very hard to deal with what you heart says. If we were you, we would go for the positive suggestions your heart indicates.

## Lo Que Mas Extraño

Lo que más extraño son mis abuelos. Como quisiera que mis abuelos estuvieran vivos. Según me han dicho que tener abuelo es bonito. Yo no tube la oportunidad de conocer a mis abuelos, pero me hubiera gustado haber tenido un abuelito.

**From The Beat:** Sentimos que no hayas podido haber realizado ese deseo. Pero, estamos seguros que algún día sabras lo que es ser un abuelo.

## What I Miss The Most

What I miss the most are my grandparents. I wish they were alive. According to what other have said, to have them alive is beautiful. I didn't have the opportunity to meet my grandparents, but I wish I had them.

**-Tavo, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** We are sorry that you didn't make that dream come true. But, maybe one day, you'll get the chance to see them. Someday you may know what it is to be a grandparent.

The Beat  
Within

## Lo Que Me Hace Diferente

A mí lo que me hace diferente es mi familia y mis metas. Primero que todo mi familia porque son las únicas personas que me han apoyado en las decisiones que tomo, mas en particular mi madre porque me da palabras de alientos par que siga adelante. Me dice que cumpla mis metas.

Mi segunda meta es tener una familia única y graduarme para ayudar a mi madre, darle lo que nunca tubo, ser alguien en la vida, lebantarme de donde estoy y cumplir mis metas.

**From The Beat:** La familia siempre tiene que ir primero antes de todo. Ellos siempre nos aconsejan que es lo mejor que debemos hacer y nosotros nunca escuchamos. Tieneas bonitas metas en mente, que no se te olviden. ¡Comienza ahora! ¡Es tiempo!

## What Makes Me Different

What make me different are my family and my goals.

First of all, my family is first because they are the only people who have supported me the decision I make, especially my mother because she provides words of motivations to help me succeed. She tells me to fulfill my goals.

My second goal is to have a unique family, graduate to help my mother, give her what she never had, and be someone in life, lift myself up from where I am and fulfill my goals.

**-Juan, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** The family is always first before all. They always advice the best we should do and we never listen. You have beautiful goals in mind, so don't forget them. Start now! It's time!



## Estaré Aquí

Mi nombre es Rudy. Soy de Honduras y la razón que estoy preso es porque vendo drogas. Dicen que nos van a deportar, pero eso a mí no me importa.

Yo vine a este país porque tenía mucha necesidad. Aunque me deporten, eso no le hace porque en 15 días, estaré en San Francisco de nuevo.

Mi sueño Americano lo realizaré a como sea. Tengo la fe en Dios que mis sueños serán realizados.

**From The Beat:** De esta forma como vas, nunca vas a cumplirlos. ¿Como tu vision sobre el sueño Americano? ¿Qué da? ¿Cuales son las ventajas?

## I'll Be Back

My name is Rudy. I am from Honduras and the reason why I am here is because I sell drugs. They say that they are going to deport me, but I don't care.

I came to this country because I had a lot of need. Even if they deport me, that don't matter because I'll be back in San Francisco in days.

I will realize my American dream in any way. I have the faith in God that my dream will come true.

**-Rudy, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** The way you are, you will never make it. What's your definition of the American Dream? How will you get it?

## Lo Que Me Inspira

Un Lugar donde me siento seguro en los momentos que necesito estar seguro es cuando acompaño a mi madre a la iglesia.

Lo que me inspira a ser diferente es mi hijo, mi familia, y por la que me dio mi vida y me ha enseñado todo lo que soy hoy, mi madre. Estoy aquí porque le he fayado.

Lo único que me inspira a salirme de las cosas malas y de los malos caminos son los consejos de mis padres y el temor a Dios.

Ellos me han enseñado andar por el camino correcto, pero a veces uno comete errores, los cuales necesitamos aprender y reflexionar, tratar de hacer lo mejor por nuestras vidas y nuestro futuro y el de nuestros hijos.

**From The Beat:** Sigue los consejos de los que quieren lo mejor para ti. Ellos ya han pasado por las experiencias que tú estás pasando. Si ellos te dicen que hagas esto y que no hagas algunas cosas, es por alguna razón. Ellos quieren evitar que pases por experiencias peores que a lo mejor ellos ya pasaron. Haz las cosas como se deben. Aprende de la voz de la experiencia.

## What Inspires Me

A place where I feel safe in the moments I need to feel safe is when I go with my mother go church.

What inspires me to be different is my son, my family, and the person who gave me life and has taught me everything I know now, my mother. I'm here because I have failed her.

The only thing that inspires me to get out from bad things and from the bad paths I am in are the advices of my father and the fear I have towards God.

They have taught me to walk through the correct roads, but sometimes we commit errors that we need to learn from, to reflect, and to try to do our best in our lives and the future of our kids.

**-Jose, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** Follow the advice from those who want the best for you. They may have gone through the experience you are going through right now. If they tell you to do this and not to do certain things, is because of a reason. They are trying to avoid you from going through the worst experience they went through. Do things as you're supposed to. Learn from the voice of the experience.

## Lo Que Me Preocupa

A veces me preocupo por las noticias que salen por el periódico que dicen que a todos los Hondureños nos van a deportar. A veces me siento bien porque voy a estar con las personas que quiero y podre estar con los Catrachos que amo y extraño tanto.

Muy pronto volveré. Yo me sé el camino de vuelta así que no me preocupo porque lo tomo como un viaje a mi propio país.

A todos los Catrachos que lean esto, no se aguiten por nada.

**From The Beat:** Si vuelves a venir, recuerda de lo que no debes hacer para no hechar todo a la basura. A lo mejor tú sienta esto divertido, pero acuerdate que todo viene con consecuencias y eso es lo que realmente odiamos. Aprende de la experiencias de los otros, aquellos quienes han periods partes de sus vidas, dignidad y hasta sus vidas.

## What Worries Me

Sometimes I get sad because of news I hear that states that Hondurans are going to be deported. In a way, it makes me feel happy because I'm going to be with the people I care and I will also be with the people I miss the most.

I'll be back soon. I know the way here, so I don't worry because I take this as a trip back to my own country.

To all, don't worry.

**-Sebastián, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** If you come back again, remember the things you're not supposed to do, so you won't throw your effort away. What you do might be fun right now, but remember that everything comes with consequences. Learn from the experience others had gone through, those who have lost part of their lives, their dignities, and even life.

## Mi Diferencia

Lo que me hace ser diferente a los demás es que uno viene a este país a hacer dinero y somos pocos lo que logramos hacer dinero porque unos llegamos y otros mueren en el camino.

Le doy gracias a Dios porque cuando uno sale de nuestro país, uno viene decidido a morir en el camino por el tren, por el de cierto, los animales que hay en el camino, y todos llegamos a los Estados Unidos. Unos llegamos y otros mueren, otros quedan sin manos, otros sin piernas.

La vida de los mojados es feliz a la misma vez triste porque sufrimos.

**From The Beat:** Es bien triste escuchar las cosas que ustedes pasan durante ese viaje hacia acá. Sabemos que es muy difícil el camino y eso que no entendemos porque hacen cosas que les quite lo que tanto esfuerzo lograron. Las cosas que pasan como hambre, miedo, dolor y sufrimiento que pasan por el de cierto son cosas que consideraríamos. Esperamos que aprendas sobre esta experiencia.

## My Differences

What makes me difference from others is that I came to this country to make money. Not too many of us make money, because some of us die in the journey.

I thank God for helping us. When you leave the country, you are decided to die in the road of the train, in the desert, and by the animals you encounter in the road. Some of us make it and others die, others end up without a hand, leg and even life.

The lives of the immigrants are happy, but sad because we suffer.

**-Aguilar, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** It's very sad to read the stories you've gone through while coming here. We know the journey is very hard, and that's why we can't understand why you do things that take all the effort away. The things you've gon' through, such as hunger, fear, thirst, and suffering in the desert, make us wonder why you would put your life on the line here? We hope you learn from this experience.

## Este Tiempo Me Ha Hecho Ver

Aquí como siempre escribiéndoles para poderme desahogar un poco mi mente que está cargada de tantas cosas que a veces creo que nunca podre olvidar.

A veces pienso que no voy a salir de aquí, pero no me preocupo porque se que mi morra me va a esperar el tiempo que sea. Si busca a otro, no me importara porque yo mismo me lo busque por hacer mamadas.

Cuando salga cambiaré por todas las personas que quiero sobre todo por mi madre a quien la extraño mucho y que sufre por mis actos. Le aseguro que no volveré aquí aunque a veces me siento bien. A veces pienso que estoy perdiendo mi juventud y no puedo estar con mi novia.

Creo que necesitaba esto para pensar en mi vida y darme cuenta que hay cosas más importante que hacer maldadas.

Tengo mucha gente por quien vivir y salir adelante. Si algún día salgo, intentaré de cambiar por todas las personas que amo y me aman. Les aseguro que saldré adelante y sere diferente.

En las calles, no me lleban a ningún lado. Si no me lleban a la cárcel, me lleban a la tumba y mi vida vale mucho.

**From The Beat:** Estamos muy contento que este tiempo aquí te ha ayudado a reflexionar en los errores que esta haciendo, y darte cuenta de la claridad de las cosas. Como dices, hay mucha gente quien te quiere y espera por ti, entonces estate ahí. Se nota que también este lugar te ha madurado y te ha hecho ser una persona más responsable con tus actos. No te des por vencido, no dejes que las malas juntas borren estos pensamientos positivos que tienes en mente para cumplir.

## This Time Has Made Me See

Here I am like always writing to be able to express my mind a little bit that is charged of stupid things I think I will never forget.

Sometimes I think I'm not going to get out, but I don't worry so much because I know my girl is going to wait for me all the time. If she finds someone else, I don't care because it was my fault for messing up.

When I get out, I'm going to change for all the people I love, especially my mother who I love so much and suffer because of my action. I can assure you that I won't be back here even if I feel good in here. Sometimes I think I'm loosing my youth and I can't be with my girl.

I have a lot of people whom to live for and to succeed. If I get out someday, I'll try to change for the people I love and love me. I assure you that I will succeed and be different.

The streets won't take you anywhere. If they don't take me to jail, they will take me to my grave and my life has a great value.

**-Anderson, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** We are very happy that this time has help you reflect on the mistakes you are making, and that it has made clear how things really are. Like you said, there are a lot of people who love you, and are waiting for you, so be there. It's noticeable that this place has made you mature and a responsible man with your actions. Don't give up, and don't let bad influences erase these positive ideas and hopes from your mind.

*What makes me be one of the best is school, because I like studying. Studying completes everything.*

## Sobre Los Temas

El lugar más seguro es la casa de mis padres. Ahí me siento alejados de los problemas y seguro de mi mismo. Ahí encuentro la paz y ahí fluyen mis mejores ideas.

Algo que me hace diferente es la calma que tengo cuando voy a enfrentar un problema. Cuando todo va mal, yo trato de dar una cara alegre y sin preocupaciones. Yo uso el dicho, "después de la tempestad, llega la calma."

**From The Beat:** Entonces deberías de quedarte en el lugar más seguro que puedas. Quedate en el lugar donde te guie a lo mejor de la vida.

## About The Topics

The safest place is the house of my parents. There, I feel safe, away from problems and sure about myself. There, I find peace, and my best ideas run over my head.

Something that makes me different is the patience I have when I am going to confront a problem. When everything is going bad, I try fake a happy face and a face without worries. I say the saying, "after the storm, the calm comes."

**-Alexis, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** Maybe you should stay with your parents for awhile until you get back on your feet, doing things right!

## Mis Pensamiento Sobre Los Temas

Donde me siento seguro es estar con mi familia, al lado de mi mama, de mis hermanos y de todos los seres queridos. También estar en el templo de Dios, en la iglesia donde me estoy con nuestro Señor Jesus Cristo porque me da amor y confianza.

Lo que me diferencia a otros es que no soy como ellos, no pensamos igual, yo trato de tener buenos pensamientos en mi mente.

Lo que me hace ser uno de los buenos es el estudio porque me gusta estudiar. El estudio es todo.

Lo que me hace diferente a los demás es mi físico y mi modo de pensar en buenas cosas. Me visto un poco igual, pero no soy igual. Mis sueños es ser alguien en la vida. Mis planes es tener a mi madre como una reyna, como ella se lo merece y ser un contador de empresas y tener la propia mía.

**From The Beat:** Tienes lugares seguro donde estar, pero parece que no le pones importancia. Puedes que tengas buenos pensamientos y buenas metas pero no las estas usando, no las estas poniendo en acción. Si realmente quieres darle a tu familia y a tu madre lo que se merece, deberías de empezar ahorita. Hacerlo con acciones y no con palabras.

## My Thoughts About The Topics

Where I feel safe is being with my family, next to my mother, brothers, and all my loved ones. Also being in the temple of God, in church where I am with Jesus Christ, makes me feel safe because it gives love and trust.

What makes me different from others is that I am not like them, we don't think equally, because I try to keep good thoughts in my mind.

What makes me be one of the best is school, because I like studying. Studying completes everything.

What make me different from others are my physical and my way of thinking on positive things. I dress almost the same, but I am not the same. My dreams are to treat my mother like a queen, the way she deserves, and be a business accountant and have my own business.

**-José, San Francisco**

**From The Beat:** You have safe place to go to, but it seems like you don't pay attention to those places. You may have good thoughts and good goals in mind, but you are not putting them into action. If you really want to give your mother what she deserves, you should start right now. Do it with action and not just with words.

### Muddy Shoes

I walk on yards wit' muddy shoes,  
 Reflect the taint of my soul  
 Try to scrub away my sins  
 But the devil won't let me go  
 Like parole holds and level four wardens  
 The maker of orphans, Was like a Bates Motel Manager  
 First name: Norman  
 But I've had a change of heart  
 An entire cardiac transplant  
 Pulled by old loyalties to put sin where yo' man's at  
 Won't lie just like I won't testify  
 Still fantasize about crime  
 Rip guts and grinds, vendettas, and jail time  
 Lustin' fo' my victim's and multiple info'mant's,  
 Gourds  
 Like, "You took me away from my family,  
 "So I'ma take away you from yours!"  
 But if I take anything away from prison  
 It's the strength to bury the .44  
 And the wisdom and humility  
 To forget about evening scores  
 Give a fluck if you don't feel it!  
 You don't like it?  
 Then just leave it  
 But I've lived it  
 So I spit it  
 All the murders, all the dealin's  
 As I sit in cement  
 I try to reach beyond you jakes  
 Try to circumvent a youngsta's pride  
 'Cause pack mentality is fake  
 Spit blades that hit brains, 'cause words cut to the bone  
 Take a look in the eyes of a ryda figga  
 I ain't eva goin' home!  
 While mob affiliates, fill ya' head wit' filth again  
 Fifts of Henn  
 To bend yo' will  
 Handle steel  
 Hit the pen  
 Big fish in a lil' pond  
 Don't get fish hooked, ya' guppy  
 And roll wit' tainted souls  
 Walk prison yards wit' shoes muddy.

Our next writer is an old school friend of ours. Ray has been around the Beat for a very long time. Ray is from the Bay Area and has been in the same shoes a lot of you walk today. He was a young hard headed kid that wanted to prove himself to everybody. He had so much pride, and didn't want to listen. He was out there bangin' and slangin', trying to get that street fame. Whatever you want to call it, but Ray is now serving a life sentence. He's writing to us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, Ca. Now Ray is trying to do everything he can to better himself and keep a positive view on life. He knows that those walls can't change him, nor the system can't change him either. It's up to him to want to change. And that goes for each and every single individual. He also devotes himself to try to reach to some of you young readers before you make the mistake he made and find yourself in prison for a very long time. So take words of advice to heart, not as in inmate, but as a father, a husband, a brother, a friend, and a person with motivation on trying to better his life. Give it up for Ray folks!

### Dear Beat W/O Writers

I send my love and respect  
 Now observe as my verbals bounce like a personal check  
 Personally, I pursue release, wit' each verse that I spit  
 'Cause let's face it, as long as I'm faceless, you'll allow me to vent  
 But if I put a picture to words, could you picture me on your curb?  
 Draped in ketchup, a gangsta encases the nerd  
 Case in point  
 View you  
 In my tattoos, dude  
 Visualize the hate they speak fo' those who wear the color  
 True to the G-code  
 G's know  
 We go  
 Hard to the point  
 Would rather go home, but we can't  
 Would rather be soft, but we ain't  
 And it's a possibility, my destiny relies on thugs and thieves, to put the test to me  
 So I can testify to lives, of what it's like, to be a G  
 Is you feeling me, wit' sympathetic epiphanies?  
 Maybe my baby lady was denied her dumb ass daddy  
 So I could share wit' daughters  
 The burdens/ put upon they fathers  
 To explain the pain they'd know if stopping you was within' their power  
 As is, you relate to what I say  
 'Cause I'm just words on pages  
 Able to morph back and forth, amongst multiple races  
 I'm white and yellow, black 'n' brown Back it down or hold yo' ground  
 This is fo' these in pens wit' pens and ain't playing around  
 Like broken crosses is  
 But came fo' others than themselves  
 Like Miss Muñeca who's heart bleeds fo' those who breathe abuse and hell  
 Amuse yo'selves, but understand we've experienced futility  
 And still made it to the streets  
 Like E-Money, you can succeed  
 Like Genevieve, who moved down, from Moo-Town to do rounds  
 Just to tell you her point of view of youth, and what it do now  
 Could you clown, still unaffected by Berettas and wig splittas'  
 Wit' soul intact to rattle cats like Mikhail Markhasev?  
 Has it occurred to you yet?  
 That this is what thug life get?  
 Excuse me, my mouth is burning 'cause I just spit fire...  
 With all due respect.

*Hit the pen*

*Big fish in a lil' pond*

*Don't get fish hooked,*

*ya' guppy*

*And roll wit' tainted souls*

*Walk prison yards*

*wit' shoes muddy.*



## What Happens (Battle Rappin)

(First verse)

This is what happens, when you mix gangsta rap wit' thizzin'  
 Force it on 'em like religion  
 Call it catholathizzin'  
 I'm fixin', to run around town wit' fake ID's  
 Made from dead babie's  
 Birth certificates  
 "Earth to skum: You's an idiot!"  
 And still you take me serious-ly- as heart attacks  
 'Cause in the Bay, ya' facin' shark attacks  
 Like swimmers by Seal Rock  
 I could show you how steel rocks  
 And roll away from the cops  
 While heavy metal melts a whole in yo' knot  
 Displace yo' eardrum  
 Something fearsome  
 'Cause on, the block we no longer box, foo's  
 We just box crews  
 In pine boxes, ship to Duggan's Mortuary  
 Various stages of de-comp-o-sition  
 We battle for a pot to piss in  
 Skum B-A-G/ 'Cause Bay Area gangsta rap's religion  
 Pump a fist to the sky  
 'cause it's bag rap 'till I die!

(second verse)

This is what happens  
 When you agitate a factor, just a fraction  
 Export minimal effort, to get maximum smashin'  
 Verbal bashings, tongue lashings that'll take you back to the slave days  
 Even if you isn't black, have you on track, fo' a slave wage  
 You try to make moves like ex-lax  
 I wouldn't pay twenty-five cents fo' yo' download  
 I want my friggin' quarter back!  
 Like the '9ers want a Steve Young or another young Montana  
 I throw bullets from guns, in sums  
 That could subtract yo' bandana  
 Drop yo' rag top, convert-able, ya fitted  
 After that, how many cats, gonna risk my wrath, to tell 'em

skumbag done did it?

I suggest you rhyme alone  
 Don't try to bite my poem  
 Just fly on home  
 And chalk outline ya' microphone  
 Remember, I ride wit' chrome  
 This is what happens when I raise the bar like gymnastics  
 So you might wanna rethink yo' challenge, fo' you phonetically get yo' ass kicked!!

(third verse)

This is what happens when a third verse hits ya' like a third burst  
 From an MP-5  
 Did ya' realize  
 I could kill ya' with the first hurt  
 And like a pervert  
 Get off on bestiality  
 'Cause I could screw you wit' a big dog, while a eagle eats your cavities  
 Battle me in reality  
 You get crapped on like a port-a-potty  
 Remove your gaurd from body, dude  
 And watch you float like fish food  
 In the Bay  
 Dre Dog spits doctrine  
 Mac Dre is religion  
 The weight of my Temple's a ton  
 I'm Daly City's forgotten son, spittin'  
 Three verses without a book, they say  
 It's like fishing without a hook,  
 I play with words like words on scrabble boards  
 My caliber on subwoofers  
 Poops on you like verbal turds  
 Never forget, I'm from the curb  
 Flourish on gutter shhh  
 What I breathe in is town business  
 The penitentiary's non-penitent just, vocally cut you to ribbons  
 'Cause that is what happens  
 When one who used to be a booth starts clappin'  
 Havin' the coroners that surround your corpse sayin'  
 "Gawdawmn! Look what happened!"  
 So, battle me!

## Listen Up

To (Beat writer) Mr. Steven Baer,

First and foremost, allow me to extend my utmost respect, and express my hopes that this kite find you in the best of health and spirits. Now, allow me to address what's on my mind.

I recently read your pieces in The Beat Within; and was greatly impressed. Your points of view were well stated and your word play was sick. I definitely feel your frustration at the lack of rehabilitative programs for those cons who would like to succeed at making it home, and staying home. I, myself, am a lifer, as well as a husband and father. I'm lucky though. Being only 27 years old, I have a chance at making it home in my late 40's, early 50's. Until then, I do everything I can to better myself: correspondence college courses, anger management classes, writing the Beat. Anything that will help me to parole sooner rather than later is a must.

What I've found though, what really matter's, is humility. Pride kills, brah brah. It's the emotion that 'cause us to

worry what the next man thinks of us-even though we say we don't give a funk what people think, we all do to some extent. It's what pushes us to push back, to not let a slight go. If I beat a man down for scuffin' my shoes, will it get me home quick? No.

Understand, please, that I'm not saying to be a religious nut, coward, or push over. I only advocate common sense. Don't floss. Don't brag. Don't get caught up in unnecessary drama. I mean, what's the point? I didn't come to person to make friends or to impress another con. Funk them and their respect. Why do-I want some dope man, dope fiend, rapist or murder to respect me? He can't get me a parole date, yadidimean?

I don't mean to be condescending or patronizing, and hope you didn't take my words to be so. I just wanted to give credit when credit is due. Congratulate you on your waitings, and express an opinion. I'd hope might help you. As one young man in the pen to another, I simply send my respects, and here to read more of your work in future Beat issues. Good luck and God bless, homey.

Sincerely,

## The Difference of Indifference

Nowadays, everything is based on statistics; everything is measured, meted, examined externally and internally, and dissected until there is nothing more to dissect. For every statement there is a sea of numbers, studies and information. Of course, I often have reservations about statistics (I'm sure there is a statistic to show that I'm not alone in that as well!), and then I'm left with reservations about my reservations.

Really, who knows what is truly going on beneath the unstable waters of men's hearts, and what is behind each situation? Everything, including numbers and so-called "facts", can be manipulated to fit a certain agenda—the glass is either half-full, half-empty, or simply has water in it—depends who is telling the story...

It's easy to get lost in this world's noise, and even easier to become indifferent to everything that is beyond us on a personal level. Who cares, right? We're just little fish in a big aquarium. What can we do? This is not uncommon in prison, especially among lifers and long-timers, who have been put away for good by the long arm of the law. This indifference is more of a preoccupation with other things—focusing on sports, canteen, and the daily bustle of prison life, all the while avoiding the big question of life that people must face on both sides of the fence. Granted, we're stranded on this side of the barbed wire, but does that necessarily mean that we're precluded from fully living life, from being human the way God desires us to be?

Prison is a great school of life—both about ourselves and those with whom we interact on a daily basis. Yes, we're "little people" on a socio-economic ladder, but we're still human, and are called to be that by a higher calling than any social responsibility. This is our daily challenge, an unavoidable consequence of being born and living, and so it's important to focus on the most important aspect of existence without substituting it for whatever else may be going on.

What in the world does all of this mean, anyway? For me, it often means acknowledging at the beginning of the day that this given day is a gift from God, and that is His—not mine. Whatever happens throughout the day, I should ask for grace to handle it with grace and to be thankful. Then, at the end of the day, I often reflect how I've failed in all of that, and ask for forgiveness—and for the strength to try again tomorrow (if I'm fortunate enough to be granted a 'tomorrow'). This aspect cannot be measured by statistics, but is has to be lived and experienced.

I sometimes think in my teen years I resembled a mangy dog. I cared little about others—including my family and those closest to me—and so my selfish psychosis grew worse as I got older. You see, the thing with rabies, is that it melts the brain, and so a mangy dog will first attack others

Our next writer is coming live and direct from the Corcoran State walls in Corcoran, California. Markhasev hardly ever misses an issue and his pieces can clearly tell you why. On his upcoming piece Mikhail really delivers nothing but knowledge for anyone seeking wisdom, or just some plain advice on life. Markhasev breaks down the mistakes he made in life and tells you exactly what he's learned, and maybe you can learn too. Don't wait until you find yourself where he's at. Listen to his words and learn not only from his mistakes, but learn from the advice he's trying to give you.

in its way. Then, when there is no one left to attack, it will turn on itself—begin chasing its' own tail, or even gnaw on its' own leg.

At first, in my early teens, I isolated myself from my family and the people who cared for me. As they say, "I stopped caring". Then, I began to turn on those who stood in the way of my madness. Finally, after I finished with others—I turned on myself, and began to kill myself with drugs and a wreck less life. Indifference toward others led to indifference toward myself.

Now, I don't get to choose the people I'm around. In prison, that choice is made for you by the administration. But, remembering my teenage "meltdown" I've decided to treat others the way I'd want to be treated since that's the only way for me to recover my own humanity.

Life as a mangy dog is more of a slow death, but learning to be fully human—a "man made in God's image and likeness", is the only path to true life, to the fullness of life, to which even physical death become a mere stepping stone, at the least to a very tragic one. Is it easy not to care about others? Yes and no. It's easier than to care about oneself, because we always have love enough for ourselves, but not for others. But, non the other hand, by not caring, we lose ourselves in our own indifference, and surrender ourselves to our own selfishness—which costs us dearly in the long run.

Did someone not say that the only thing that needs to happen in order for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing? Growth as a person cannot be measured statistically, but it's what really matters in the end. Perhaps the 'parole board' will fail to see it, and it cannot be recorded on a certificate, but those around us will know it, as will the Ultimate Judge and Maker of all, from Whom both prisoner and free will one day receive their due.

May God help us all to become what we were created to be in Christ!

I'm nobody! Who are you? Are you nobody, too? Then there is a pair of us—don't tell! They'd banish us, you know.

"How dreary to be somebody!  
How public, like a frog  
To tell your name the livelong day  
To an admiring bog!"  
-Emily Dickinson

*Did someone not say that the only thing that needs to happen in order for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing? Growth as a person cannot be measured statistically, but it's what really matters in the end.*

## Shouts Out To Beat Readers

I would like you to put in one of the big books in the page from San Mateo. Well I haven't wrote you guys in a minute but I wanted to see if you could send me this month's & last month's packet if you can. I really like to reading this month's packet because it keeps me out of trouble. Well hope to hear from all the writers out there. Thanks for the inspiration!

## The Choices You Make In Life

My words are from the heart there's no end  
I don't want to be your friend  
I just want you to listen  
To the story of my life  
Because the fine print is my strife  
Because right now your head's up in space  
Thinking nothing can touch your body or face  
It's time to replace your take on the game  
You believe is the way to get your name  
Your into the flow of pay  
But it will bring you nothing but pain  
Believe me no gangsta' out here will hesitate to kill you out here  
Well you feel me no man ever say's he's about this family or his girlfriend you dig?  
See we gangsta's fight for the right to survive  
And be free but we gangstas continue with our deed  
That's gone get you sent to jail  
But gangsta's say it's nothing to a boss  
And we gangsta's still fail to realize we think we are growing strong  
But in our thoughts we're growing weak  
Gangsta's out here rep their city 'til the day they die  
Like me and you, feel me  
We gangsta's have to stay alive in this game  
Watching out behind you because this life is no game  
Because enemies may try to catch you blind  
Catch you slippin'  
But on the real homie they trippin'  
Trying to get out of the life your livin'  
Gangstas go against the grain and go for something you can't gain  
Keep it real, in the game ain't gone get you nowhere  
Make a dumb choice that would get you killed.

Our next writer is writing to us from a group home in Atascadero, Ca. Coming from San Mateo County Juvenile Hall, Johnny aka Demon delivers some very brilliant and honest writing. He's not afraid to let people know what he feels about his family or his girlfriend. He talks real. He's not impersonating anything as he tells you the truth of what's going on in his life. So give it up for Jonathan.

*when I was locked up I used to say I didn't care about my family, my girl or the ones around me, or in my life.*

## The Truth

The truth of a gangsta on the real every time you're with your homies you say you don't care about anyone in your life or your girl. That she's nothing to you but a game, but in your head your always thinking of her name. Me locked up is not a game homeboy. I know you'll feel the same. I'm in a group home waiting to go home. You tell everyone you don't care how long you're here but deep down inside you don't mean any of those things.

See when I was locked up I used to say I didn't care about my family, my girl or the ones around me, or in my life. But all of those things where not true because I missed my girl and my family a lot too. Now that I'm back in here I think of all the stupid stuff I did. And I don't want to go back, never, you feel me?! My homies ask me why I stopped smoking and I told 'em 'cause I don't like smoking anymore, but on the real it's because I made a promise to my girl and I have to keep it on the down low.

The truth of a gangsta is that they hide what they most love and the most. They are scared of losing in their lives. I love my girl so much she is an angel sent from above. I thank God for sending you my why because ever since you've been in my life my life has changed. And you'll try to keep me on the right line in life. You been there no matter what. Even if I got you mad you've been there.

That's why I love you so much. I see a lot of ninjas be hating because you're my lady. And you chose me as your date and I'm the one your dating now. Ninja's were hating, because they were too late to be your date. The truth of a gangsta is showing you my love.

## JAY BLACK

## Brief Rundown

I was born in the slums of the Lou. I was raised by a single mother alone with a few siblings. As far back as I can remember life has been a struggle for me and my fam. Moms struggled to feed and clothe us. Every one else never helped out but they always added to the problem.

My childhood was stripped away from me by the wicked streets of the west side. Nine years of age I met a guy named lil' Al who became my best friend. He also was going through it. At this time we were in the fourth grade. We started kicking it real tough. We were trying to be grown. Hanging with the big boys. We quickly became the new forces of the hood. We started of smoking weed, stealing, selling dope and finally gang banging.

Eventually, we parted ways 'cause I wasn't really down with the set he chose but no love is lost. I started doing my own

Our next writer is writing to us from South Central Correctional Center in Licking, Mo. Jay Black took the route that a lot of you readers took in life. He chose to bang, and slang, smoke weed, drinking at a young age. Black gives us a brief rundown on his life, and the mistakes he made. So take it from someone that's been there and done that. Listen to Black's story and maybe you can learn something about life.

thang and putting in work for the set I chose and to make a long story short I end up with multiple murder charges. I ended with two kids that I do not really know. But still love. I'm stuck with life in the pen right now. The mothers of my kids have bailed on me. Therefore, it's obvious that I never overcame the struggle. Hopefully I'll win the appeal on this case and finally reach the goals I have set for myself.

To The Beat Within and other people who have shared their stories, thanks for the inspiration, keep your heads up behind them cell block walls fam'.



## Fear

The past we fear  
 The future we fear  
 The present we now fear  
 Thinking of what was  
 What could have been  
 Locked up, bound by time  
 Fighting for survival  
 What will it be?  
 I pray the Lord will open my eyes  
 To let me see  
 Fear doesn't and won't be a part of me.

## Anger

Anger is with in us  
 It is a scary emotion  
 We have to learn to over come it  
 Knowing this feeling comes as a must

Anger can sometimes be blind  
 Recognize it  
 Never let it get the best of you  
 We can't let it control our mind

Take the bad, turn it good  
 No matter the situation  
 To deal with it like I knew you could

Do you want to win?  
 Set your mind  
 It is only an emotion  
 You have to sin

Think before you speak  
 Certainly before you act  
 Let the anger work for you  
 Not against you  
 Learning how to be humble and meek.

Our next writer is a lady writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Gatesville, Texas. Connie does a good job of picking different topics and writing a poem on each and every one of them. She's an incredible thinker that in turn hopes to get some of y'all to think also. She's not afraid to let her emotions run on paper. So with that saying please give it up for Connie!

## Your Touch

When I think of you  
 You touch  
 The warmth we could share  
 Because we care

It's your touch  
 It keeps me and comforts me  
 Helps me to see

Just when I think it couldn't get better  
 I feel your touch  
 The softness of your hands  
 The moistness of your kiss  
 Your love is my crutch  
 I feel it in your touch.

## Family

What a word  
 A noun  
 It means so much in many ways  
 It's by love and blood we are found

Big or small  
 Cherish it all  
 Never let go of what is good  
 Love them like you know you would

Spending time together  
 Growing  
 Loving  
 Just being there  
 After all it is your family.

## I'm Diggin' It!

Wow, was I impressed with volume 13.24. It makes me happy to know that people are beginning to speak and write down their truest and most inner thoughts. I've gone through a lot in my life and most of my personal experiences I share with The Beat because my sorrow can help the next who might be in the same shoes! I am blessed to read about such talented people, those who take their pain and convert it into a lesson others can benefit from. Life is too short, but yet we love to live it fast.

When it's over, people are shocked. When truly one shouldn't be shocked about death. Death roams the streets night and day. It's everywhere we go! So why do we act shocked or grieved when it knocks on your neighbor's door? Open up your eyes and see that this ain't no game. It's life. It's real. You're human. Why do people walk around acting as though they can't be hurt? As though they're immortal! Man, wake up! You're not here to have life served on a silver platter. You want to live the fast life, selling drugs, gang banging and having babies, accept the consequences.

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Niantic, Connecticut. Muñeca, our East Coast partner, has been a long time writer for The Beat Within Magazine. She really digs our publication because of the realness that we bring to the table. And at the same time we dig her writing because she brings some real talk to the pages. She speaks from her heart and she speaks nothing but the truth. Listen to her speak as she's been through it all. She's been where a lot of you are sitting at right now, and she's still behind bars doing a long bid. So please don't take her words for granted and listen to her spill some game!

You're big and bad on the outs with your boys harden up some, and accept that you're now in prison.

There's not much you can do but move back or move forward! In life there's no pause, no skip, and surely there's no rewind. A lot of people say they been robbed of their youth. To be honest no one, nor nothing can rob you of the time that's been given to you. Because once it's been given it can't be returned, or taken. Life is what it is. You accept it or you don't if you feel some type of way get over it because if not it's only going to harm you! Take it from the one who's seen it all. I've got an old soul, and to this day I realize that all that goes down has its reasons!

## This Girl

There's this girl I like  
She's special and fine  
And every day I wake  
I hope she'll be mine  
She's Smart, she sexy  
And make she makes me feel good  
And if she ever needed help  
I'd do whatever I could  
She's more then just a friend  
She's apart of my heart  
And I can't wait till were close  
Cause for now we're Apart  
But I know she feels me  
Cause I'm feelings her too  
And I thank the lord above  
For bringing me an Angel  
Like You!  
Love always  
Dedicated to my wife Susie

## This Girl

There's this girl I like  
And can't wait to touch  
And the more time that goes by  
I want her so much  
She's beautiful, honest, pure  
And true  
And whether asleep or awake  
I dream of all we can do  
She's a goddess in my eyes  
And I love when we speak  
Because I know she keeps it real  
Everyday of the week  
She deserves the beat  
And that's what she'll get  
So I love you girl  
And don't ever forever  
Dedicated to my wife Susie.

## I Love You

Miss you, want to kiss  
Hug & hold you  
And everything I say  
Don't forget that I told you  
Because when we be together  
All these things I'm gonna show you  
From making sweet love  
To just cuddling up, to kissing  
And hugging  
To getting to know you  
To your smile, your eyes, your hair  
And you touch  
Girl if there's sometimes I should say  
It's I love you so much!  
Love always  
Dedicated to my wife Susie.

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in San Diego, Ca. Ascencio is a talented writer as he submits his pieces varying on different topics. This week Ascencio has submitted four poems dedicated to the love of his life, his wife. So to all you lovers out there maybe you can take a few pointers from our man Ascencio.

## My Light

You're my guiding light  
And you're my shining star  
And there's a lot of things about you  
That I could tell you that you are  
You've been truly blessed from heaven up above  
You're an angel in the skies  
With feathers of a dove  
You remind me of the rainbow  
That covers across the sky  
And I admire the way you look at me  
With that sparkle in your eye  
The very first time I met you  
I some how fell in love  
And ever since that moment  
You're all I've been thinking of  
Every time I'm around you  
I feel like I'm under a spell  
And I've been wanting you to caress me gently  
And make love to me as well  
My love for you is growing each and everyday  
And I've been wanting you to caress me gently  
In your own special way  
You are everything I could ever want and more  
And I could surely ever desire  
And every time I'm around you  
It sets my heart on fire  
When I wake in the morning  
And I go to bed at night  
You're always on my very mind  
And I'm just wanting to hold you tight  
Every time I'm around you  
Chills run up my spine  
And I feel so very blessed  
Just knowing that you're mine  
I can truly admit that I've had a wish  
That finally came true  
And that very wish that I've been praying for  
Was blessing me with you  
I've been waiting for so very long  
For someone to love me just like you  
Someone to share my secrets with  
That no one's ever known  
Someone to sing sweet love songs to me  
And caress me in the night  
And touch me where the sun don't shine  
Just to make everything feel just right  
Whenever you should need me  
I'll always certainly be there  
Because I will always love you  
I will always care  
We were meant for each other  
And we're blessed from heaven up above  
And as times like these that we're not together  
Just know you are all I am thinking of  
Our love will last forever  
Because we were meant to be  
And I'm going to always love you dearly throughout  
eternity.  
Dedicated to Susie my wife,  
My Love.

## Gangbangin' Didn't Get Me No Where But Here!

Most of the youth who glorify gangbangin' look at their gang-organizations as the only important thing within their lives. I for one, was just like that. I started out young growing up watching my older homeboy's get out of CYA, Prison, etc.

I couldn't wait 'till it was my turn to do my part for my gang. In the hood for the most part, our homeboys are all we have and sometimes it looks like a lost cause to try and change the thinking and ways of a "gangmember". Especially from somebody who's never been in our shoe's.

Growing up gangsta is a way of life for many in Fresno, California where it's located in the Central Valley, dead center in the middle of all enemies. At one time in my life I loved nothing more than to ride for my "cause" putting in work and getting ghetto famous for being a gee with a black heart. You feel me? I gave all my love, loyalty, and respect to my gang and while doing this, disregarded my family like nothing. At a young age I was selling drugs, using them, and packin' heat. I was robbing, gangbangin', and on a mission to hit CYA!

I accomplished that with no problems. The state was more than happy to send me up, tried as an adult with a felony strike. I took "gangbangin'" to the next level and was doing the do, politicing same old thing, got sent to the pen and started really seeing things with a more mature mind frame!

What I've always thought of my crimes against society, was hustlin', flossin', and pretty much just bossin' on lames, hurting my enemies and politicing on my own people. I called it, being a rider. But what I really understand, my choices were wrong. I was robbing and stealing 'cause it made me feel powerful and gave me some kind of control over my out of control life. I hurt people because of all my pent up anger and confusion of what life was really about.

You see, the way a young thug thinks about his or her gang is just an illusion of something good and positive, you feel me? There is no such thing as love, respect, and loyalty once you go to prison. It's a dog eat dog world in this place and I've lived it, done it, been through a lot doing this time behind these walls. I'm 27 years old and growing up it's been a lot of hate, and a lot of violence. Believe me I am not proud of this lifestyle and the problems it brings. I don't want all the youth who read this to get the wrong idea.

I'm not preaching ya' dig? Just keepin' it as real as it gets. Gangbangin' is not the business, you feel me? I'm sittin in a box hella hot with another man. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, when I could be on the streets enjoying life with my wife and loved one's. But it is what it is, and a lot of us have to learn the hard way. I ain't mad atcha.

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Wasco, Ca. Leo is no stranger to our publication. The writings he submits are very powerful and meaningful. Leo has been tied up with the street life since a young age. He's been through the juvenile Justice system and now finds himself in the adult prison system straight from CYA. All his loyalty, and respect for his gang got him nowhere in life. It got him a ticket into prison away from his wife, loved ones, away from his freedom. So he's gonna tell you his personal story about his life and gangbangin', and hopefully some of you readers out there can learn from mistakes he's made and don't have to make them on your own to find out that prison life, is not the life! So kickback on your bunk, or wherever you may be at, and listen to Leo's story.

*...the way a young thug thinks about his or her gang is just an illusion of something good and positive...*

## So Hard

Sometimes this struggle

Is so hard

But I keep on pushing

For it isn't too far

The end of the tunnel

Is where I see light

My dogs in the pen

25 to life

And my loved one's

Perishing on them streets

It gets me so mad, that I still have to pack heat

When will it stop?

This life that I live

Why I stop banging

If I'm still in the pen

These questions I have

Only you have the answer

So I knock on your door

And you still haven't answered

Are you a story?

Or are you the truth?

Or is it a brainwash?

Too scare our youth?

I should have faith

When these times get hard

But how can you blame me

When my soul's filled with scars

I know it sounds soft

But I've been pushing hard

Of my life

Gangbangin' on yards

There's nothing compared

To my new found love

She's beautiful

And gentle as a dove

I wish she only new

How much I really care

Or how this commitment

Has me on scared

But it's all good

I'm doing my hardest

I won't let you down baby

I'll treat you like a goddess

Reyna's her name

My beautiful queen

Don't let me down

Yadadaai mean!

*The Beat*



## Being a Good Example

I'm 37 years old and I have been in prison almost 20 years and I use to fight and go through changes. I was young with a big ego and troubled me. But as the years went by I went to somewhat learning from my mistakes and I had gained a lot of knowledge, but I still struggle with my ego. And now the prison system in Florida is full of young people and most of them have a good bit of time to do in prison. And the other young ones have a short to get out.

And I know that all these young people's that's under me. They are my future and I feel somewhat responsible for setting a good example for the young people who lived around me because I done been up the same roads that they are headed down. I done tripped over my ego so many times. So now is the time for me to set good example and be a representative for these young people in prison. Instead, sometimes I let them beat me for my cool, and I end fighting with the younger one's. When I should know better then that. I know from my own experience that fighting is not the answer to things.

And that's not setting good examples for the one's that's coming up under me because these young people need someone to be there for them and set good examples for them. One's goals right here in prison, is to change the way we think and react to things. So I need to be a good example to the young and to the one's who don't know any better. I want to affect the young people around me in the right and positive way.

Our next writer's name should sound familiar to a lot of you that's been tuning into our weekly publications for the past year. He writes from Union Correctional Institution located in Raiford, Florida, and always brings intelligent truth to the table. Michael use to be a knucklehead with a lot of anger trapped inside of him. The only way he use to vent out his frustrations was through fighting. Now he's realized that's not the answer. He wants to teach all you young readers and especially the one's that he sees trapped in the same system he's in. So give it up for Michael as he tells you what he's about, and gives you some advice on life in general.

## Love

Love can hurt  
Love will make you learn  
Love takes it's turn  
Love will kill  
Love can steal  
If the love that's being giving is not for real  
Love will make you hate  
If you don't appreciate love can take away  
Love can give  
The love I want got to be real  
The word love is being used all the time  
But true love is sometimes hard to find.

## KAY KAY

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in San Diego, Ca. Kay Kay is not a new writer to our publication. He use to put it down for us, but hasn't been able to due to the fact that he's been in the hole. Big Kay Kay sends us just a quick shout out to all you readers and writers out there. He's in midst of doing a long bid in prison, and he briefly tells y'all that it ain't the place you want to be. So give it up for Kay Kay as he tells y'all that prison is not the spot where any of you want to be at.

## Dear Beat And Beat Readers

What's up? This is your boy Kay Kay, once again. I'm still in the hole waiting to transfer. So when I get to the next prison I'm going to write ya'll. I'm going to put it down so bad that everybody's going to feel my pain. Do you feel me? But anyways life is so much different from CYA, than here in Pen. And every morning when I wake up I thank God that I have a release date 2032. I will be 48 years old, but that's okay because some of these people in here don't have a release date and wish they did. And that's real!

But life is all right it's human to make mistakes in life, but the key is to learn from the mistakes we make. But to let people know when you come to prison you would be sleeping in a room with a toilet and that shhh crazy. To let ya'll know I hate this place cause you can't do nothing behind this 30 foot walls and but look at the walls all day. And you would hate the police in here because they tell you what to do in here. If you don't want to come here stay the fluck out of juvenile hall. If you keep on going to juvenile hall then you will be going to CYA. Then you will come where I'm at today.

I'm only twenty four years old and I'm in prison and I wish I can be home with my kids and family. And that's for real! Because living my life in prison ain't easy at all because you got to watch your back too much and worry about not getting stabbed. Think about it? If you ask me about this place it's like hell without fire. I can't stand being locked up no more. This shhh is not cool at all. So I got to cut this short for right now.. One love to everybody who write to The Beat Within.

## Help Me

I need help in so many ways. But I know true help starts with self. Help me I am falling and I don't want to be down. Help me from falling over the same mistakes. Help me to learn from my mistakes. I don't have to keep stumbling over the same mistakes again and again. Help me to better understand myself so I could learn to better understand others.

Help to lift myself up so I could lift others up. Help me to use my energy of anger in a positive way so I can stop taking my anger out on others for no reason at all. Help me to be real with myself so I could be real with others. Help to study and learn what true leadership is all about so I could be a true leader to the people.

## Wake Up

Let's wake up and get a better grip on our mind. We can't stay sleep forever. We are in prison. But let's not keep the chains on our minds and eyes. Let's wake up and use this time we got in prison, as time to build unity among each other. There's no unity in the Florida Prison System nowadays. Where it went I don't know. The system done tricked a new wave mind-set, to be on they side, and go against each other. Inmates are selling their own souls. Minds are falling weak.

As doing time is taking its toll on people. The old ways they done fold. And we are being stepped on by the system that's cold. Let's wake up and understand that all of us that are behind bars are in the same boat. It's not about fighting each other. It's not about trying to keep each other down. It's about putting the young up under the right wings so they could be taught the right way so they won't keep coming in and out of this corrupted prison. Teach them so the young people won't come out worst than when they first came into the Florida State Prison system.

## "DRUGGED"

Today I seem in the news; "A social infant dies after nose was cleaned with cotton swabbed used to clean a Meth pipe." In essence the lil' Angel was drugged to death but not by choice. I have lil' if at all any focus. Is this why I drug?

Do I have no if not lil' focus because I was drugged out of a place and into a new one at least fifteen times before I was the young tender age of ten. My innocence was stolen, took from me at an age when I did not understand, but when I was being touched lighting would affect me so deeply. So deeply perhaps that to shift through the rumble to get to the center would possibly cause the rest of the foundation come tumbling down. So we leave it buried only occasionally speak of its memory, to keep the rest intact.

Does a wise man keep his house in the sand? I was drug to church every Sunday. What did I learn? That God is real, and you can't call people fake when they being what they went cursed to be, sinfully human.

Every day I was drugged on to a chair and then had a booked shoved into my face, when I preferred fishing for Bluegill like I thought normal 8 years old boys did.

Today, I get high on the fact that I can vividly describe what is below me. What is inside me that relies on drugged to be freed. Why do we become what we despise? If our parents went illusive and we didn't like it, then why do we grow up to be illusive to our kids? I'm irritated by this imitation. I say I like myself but if I find some one like myself I most likely dislike him. Weird huh?

The final sum is the equivalent of my father's strengths minus my mom's weakness divided into the very essence of my soul, rounded off to the nearest vowel. I didn't even know my father yet, I'm so like him. So I'm predisposed to fail. That's what he tells me, and I believe him, so instead of believe the truth's inside of me. I believe a lie that's been keening us from being free. You want the truth? You can't handle the truth, because the truth is what turns a slave into a servant, and before we can lead we must learn how to serve. I was once drugged from heartache to failure. Now I'm just led down the path of victor.

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in San Diego, Ca. Our friend Frank delivers a few pieces of incredibly descriptive writing. Frank does a good job on painting a vivid picture of pain, drugs, lessons learned, bravery, and soul. His pieces run deep like the waters in the Pacific Ocean. He's really reaching back and addressing certain issues he's had to deal with in his own personal life. So we hope that you readers out there read his pieces and get the message that Frank is trying to put out for you readers!



## "AMNESTY"

It seems at times  
 Individuals measure another's worth by where they've been  
 But look where you at  
 how can you live today, and have hope for tomorrow  
 If you keep cooking back!  
 Stuck in the past, most of us living a lie  
 Stuck in a cycle, of what, where and why?!  
 Oh, yeah, a whole lot of questions  
 Not too many answers  
 The realness of this illness is like cancer!  
 And finding the cure is as hard as finding Nemo  
 For it doesn't come in pill form, tragic like still born  
 Only if I could take chemo  
 I'm sick, I trip, I say I'm a good man, yet I act like a fool  
 Isn't that a contradiction  
 Honestly, lie's and dishonesty were never my policy  
 Just part of my addiction  
 I listen, but at times I don't hear  
 Not afraid of no man, yet can't conquer my own fears!  
 Tears, blood, loss, and pain!  
 Guilty as charged, all counts shall remain!  
 Grand jury indictments on treason  
 Having my seed call another man papi  
 Should be the only reason!  
 I shall serve a life term  
 Until I earn the respect of my family!  
 And before the sky burns  
 I shall be granted  
 Amnesty?

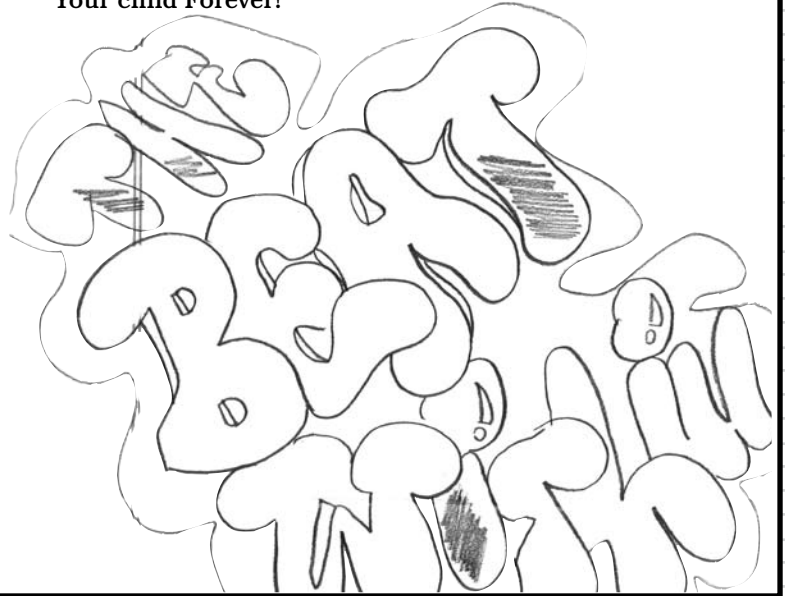
## "CROWN"

I grab my arrows and my bow . . .  
 Aim high  
 On your mark, get set, go!  
 People want success but when they get it, how will they know?  
 If you could never ever measure the treasure of the soul?  
 Too many take those penitentiary chances  
 Thinking success comes with diamonds, Maybachs, and mansions  
 But when they get there they notice something terribly wrong  
 There moving to the beat but there's no melody to their song!  
 It's not what you have that makes you happy  
 It's about being happy with what you got  
 It's okay to stack riches, but only those that won't rust on rot!  
 I will never sell out for I've already been bought!  
 And I no conger need to fight  
 For the war has already been fought!  
 So that's why you don't see alibi walk around with a frown  
 Went from suspect, to success  
 When my king gave me my crown!

## "The Miles"

Today I woke up, looked around and what did I see  
 My celly, four walls, and a toilet  
 I got myself a drug problem and my damn enemies know  
 how to exploit it!  
 So it's been a many years and a many tears caught up in  
 this cycle  
 Nobody thinks I can break free but you never know I just  
 might thou!  
 So you hold on to that hope and at night you pray loud  
 Asking the lord that I would grow up and get up out this  
 devil's playground  
 "Enough with your shenanigans frank you're 30 years old  
 "You got a daughter, one life to live  
 And if I'm not mistaken both feet with all your toes"  
 "So man up and stand up and stop with the blame"  
 "I want to be proud of my hijo(son), mijó, I don't want to  
 be ashamed"  
 How could we ever really thank her?  
 That woman who went through painful  
 And grueling labor  
 A card you could make her  
 A poem you could write her  
 But if it's warfare you're engaged in  
 All she really wants  
 Is a fighter!  
 But don't get it twisted  
 I'm not trying to give a lecture  
 Flowers, dinner, cards, they're all really nice gestures!  
 But that is something we give them maybe a few times a  
 year  
 Why don't we give them a lifetime of smiles  
 And begin to wipe away all the tears!  
 Listen, I sit here in prison, missen you

Wishin' I was kissin' you instead of just reading what  
 I wrote  
 I'm tired of makin' broken promises  
 But I'm staying committed to making a reality all the  
 things I even spoke  
 A musician with a wand  
 Uses words like magic  
 Puts it in a box and wraps it up  
 and presents it as a gift to his mom  
 Until next time we able to smile together  
 Remember we travel these smiles together  
 God bless My Mother  
 Sign with love,  
 Your child Forever!



*I'm staying committed to making a reality all the things I even spoke*

## "You on the Outside Trying to Look In"

Welcome to a lifestyle of a young T.H.U.G. Ninja...No,  
 Thug isn't gangbanging, nope! It's the hunger you got!  
 Via, my hunger is down played. Why you ask? Hmm... not  
 cause I'm black, or that I'm ex-criminal, naw! Because I  
 strive for mine's just in a whole different fashion, that's  
 why! Given the circumstances of not being a corporate suit  
 man with a brief case, doesn't mean I'm a delinquent.

I have everything to gain and a whole lot to lose as well  
 but I don't carry it on my shoulders. Why single myself  
 out or have self pity- understand where I've come from  
 first before you judge. Standing on a corner isn't how  
 I come about money either. It's too much of going five  
 step's back, but know this: thug life isn't just something  
 you misunderstood when you heard of Tupac. It just  
 means you don't forget where you've came and been; and  
 stay pushing forward by all mean's necessary.

Just like you.

*I have everything to gain and a whole lot  
 to lose as well but I don't carry it on my  
 shoulders.*

## CONTRITE

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in San Bernardino, Ca. Contrite contributed this week with a couple short, but yet powerful pieces. Contrite is straight from the street and is not ashamed but yet proud because he no longer looks towards the corners. Why? 'Cause he ain't trying to take five steps back and go to jail for a longer time. They say time is money, and you're definitely not going to get any money by doing a whole bunch of time in jail. So listen to Contrite as he delivers it raw like Sushi it brings you some advice that everyone should take heed to!

## Back Stabbers, Friends are Enemies

Taken for granted in an instance  
 I'll pleased but sicken  
 In a blink of a fraction if you turn  
 The harder you learn  
 Blessed and pleased by the best of thee  
 You would be the death of me  
 Trusting and loving, faithful plus stunning  
 But conniving and cunning  
 To a true friend with honor  
 No guts, no glory  
 This is real life, yep man  
 A true story



### Prepare To Endure

What can I say to make this right?  
 What can I do to shed some light?  
 On the way to no where  
 I look to my left  
 I'm blinded by the big picture  
 I'm mute and I'm def  
 Nothing left to say  
 Only things to prove  
 Every one's heard it all before  
 Now it's my move  
 I can anticipate the struggle  
 I can plan to take action  
 What I can't do is stop  
 Life's unexpected pain, suffering, & distractions  
 I have been caught off guard before  
 Hell, I've been floored  
 It's the will that I must endure  
 The heartache I must prepare for  
 I mostly anticipate the day  
 I wish I will never come  
 The day I have to walk away  
 The day I have to run  
 To hold onto what is clear  
 To do the right thing  
 I must purify myself with pain  
 I must prepare to endure the sting.

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility all the way from Chillicothe, Ohio. Now David use to write for our publication back in the day when he was a youngster in the max unit in B8 in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall as Streetwise. Now he finds himself back, but behind penitentiary walls, trying to vent out by writing down his feelings on paper. David is a very good writer as his poems clearly speak for themselves. So without any more delay we would like to present our ol' friend David T., and he'll tell y'all a lil' bit about himself.

### What's Wrong With You Son?

I'm thinking to myself  
 What a crazy world  
 Look out my window  
 All I see is jailbirds  
 I was raised a Cali boy  
 By the Cali authorities  
 From school yards to SHU yards  
 Just another facility  
 Prison hasn't changed  
 I ask myself has it changed me  
 I graduated from high school  
 I graduated from Juvy  
 Now I'm in the penitentiary  
 Asking myself old questions  
 I'm talking to these jailbirds  
 But they don't have any suggestions  
 I'm struggling to find the way  
 I admit I have my doubts  
 Maybe I finally snapped  
 The doctors say I'm bugged out  
 They sent me to a mental hospital  
 Asked me, "What's wrong with you son"  
 Doctor what can I say  
 I need my freedom.

### KUMASI KUFA

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Corcoran, Ca. Kumasi is a very talented writer as he's not afraid to express himself in any way. His upcoming pieces touches up on a couple of sensitive topics, and that's Mother's, and Father's. "A Mother's Joy," And "A Father's Pride" are different as Kumasi briefly describes his emotions and opinions in these two short poems.

### A Mother's Joy

One day is not enough to celebrate you  
 True is still too soon to stop  
 Life has just begun  
 She sum on the face of a woman not yet yours  
 She so beautiful with the glow only a life could give  
 Morning sickness, long hair, strong nails, fat ankles and all  
 Nothing will change her destiny  
 Still becoming one with the new her  
 She shed a small tear for what's lost  
 But even more for what she will gain  
 Things must change for the new beginning  
 What am I thinking, do she want what I want?  
 Is he the one to do this with?  
 Only time will tell  
 Too late to turn back  
 First trimester is over  
 So my joy it's all on nothing.

### A Father's Pride

As men we stand alone  
 Mostly forgotten in the process of life  
 As men we stand alone  
 Because we can not carry our pride  
 As men we stand alone  
 But without us there would be no life  
 And still we would stand alone.

*Maybe reading some quality stuff will get me back into it.*

### To The Beat/David I.

You probably don't remember me as David Towson, Maybe you remember me as Streetwise. Back in the day when you visited B8 and B9 in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. Long time ago huh buddy? Baby A, Dwayne the knowledge, Dat Nyugen, Streetwise. CH 1The Youth, CH 2 The Incarceration, Maybe soon there will be a CH 3 The Resurrection. LOL

I hope all is well. To make a long story short I went to CYA, won an appeal & caught a case in Ohio for 5 years. I have done two and a half of those years when a couple of weeks ago I happened to run across a Beat Within in Ohio. Mr. Gary Wipperman (Beat writer), gave it to me, you might know him.

Anyway, I'll try to keep in touch. I meant to visit your place one day, I still might. I just have been tied up. LOL. Anyway tell the old crew Streetwise said hello and keep on keeping on. Send me a Beat while you're at to this address. Maybe reading some quality stuff will get me back into it. And send a Santa Clara Beat as well. Just for giggles man. I would like if I was printed in the back of their pages as well. Maybe the staff there will remember me. Take care.

### I Got A Question For All Of Us To Ask Ourselves

HERE GOES THE SCENARIO:

We're on the streets doing big things. Slanging dope making money! Big money we got a crooked cop on the team. The crooked cop runs to us tells us we're under a magnify glass and the cops are about to come to our house and raid it and try to catch us slippin'. What you gonna do now? Are you gonna keep running business as normal? Or are you gonna clean up, make sure there's nothing in the spot and lay low. Obviously your gonna clean up and kick it if you got any common sense right? Because you ain't gonna risk getting caught and spending a big amount of time in the pen or the rest of your "life".

HERES ANOTHER SCENARIO: you're a bog gambler. There's a big game Lakers vs. Celtics. Championship game and the Celtic's top players are all hurt, Pierce, Ray Allen, K.G. They're not even gonna play. Who you gonna put your money on? Lakers right?

So why don't we use the same wisdom we use on them streets, the same wisdom we'd use to put our money on the Lakers on our lives?

It's a known fact that if you're out there running the streets gang banging slanging or what ever your criminal activities are. There is a high percentage, let's say over 80% that your gonna end up 6 feet deep or in prison for life or a strength. Why gamble with your life like that? Especially when you got the odds stacked against you!

You got better odds just living right and working a regular 9 to 5 stacking your chips little by little and be content with what you have. We all want everything right now! Right now! And that gets us caught up. What you sow you reap and that's real talk!

I always hear homies and other people up in here talking how their gonna get out and start slanging again but they're gonna do it smarter now. Stupid. There 's a saying that says that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results. Again now why would you put your money in the losing hand. I've been locked up for going on 10 years now, since I was seventeen years old. There's a lot of " lifers" in here been down twenty-five, and thirty years. And they're trying to go home. And each and every single one of them would tell you what I'm telling you to live right. Quit gang banging , Quit running them streets, it's not worth it. It's all a lie. That hand is a bad hand. It's a losing hand.

You might think you got no hope that this way of life is all you know. But that may be true but you can change and everyone out there Mexican, Black, White, Asian, whatever race or gang you belong to got potential to be anything you want and love a successful life. That's real talk. I wish I would have known what I know now, back when I was a teenager. Because man, I would be doing it big. I would be living right, enjoying life and I would have never came to prison. I have thrown away a lot of my life behind these walls. That's time I can never get back. So peep game. They say the game is to be sold and not told. You can pay for this game by paying attention to someone who's been there and done it. You don't want to end up dead or spend your life in prison.

I use to love running the streets, selling drugs, doing all the bad shhh a lot of you are doing now. I thought that was all there was to life. To make that money! I've been in and out juvenile hall for first degree murder not knowing if I'll ever see the streets again! Thank God I didn't get "life." I got fourteen years. I've lost so much, my youth, family

Our next writer is no stranger to our publication at all. Contreras has been a writer for our publication since way back in the day. He hasn't submitted any writing to us till now. Speaking live and direct from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, California. Contreras has been there and done all the street things that a lot of you readers out there be doing or use to be doing. All the banging, all the slanging, trying to get that street fame, caught him fourteen years in the State Penitentiary. All for what? Where's his money now? Where's his homies now? Where's everything he use to have. He gained nothing and now he's back submitting an incredible piece to let you young readers know that this ain't the life. The street life is not gonna get you that mansion, that 745 BMW. It's mostly likely gonna get you a ticket to the State Pen. But don't let us tell you anything. Take it from Contreras!

members, friends , lovers, more than I can even speak on. I'm almost home. I got a second chance and I'm not gonna waste it.

There is this quote that says the difference between winners and losers is that winners do the things that losers do not want to do. Don't be the loser that I was. I should have went to school to get my education, but I was always screwing around. I got my GED in prison and now taking college courses. I should have been doing this a long time ago. But better late than never. So I'm out with these cautious words of advice. One love.



*I always hear homies and other people up in here talking how their gonna get out and start slanging again but they're gonna do it smarter now. Stupid. There 's a saying that says that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results.*

*read the rest of D. Contreras' BWO piece on page 67*

